

Expensive tuxedo stirs reflections concerning charity

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Dana Lupo is one of our high school altar boys at St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn. On a recent Sunday, he walked into the servers' sacristy wearing a white tuxedo, a green bow tie and sparkling white leather shoes. It was a vision worthy of an ad in *Esquire* magazine.

We talked while he was covering his elegance beneath the ample white alb.

"What's going on, so dressed up?" I said.

"My brother was married yesterday and I was in the wedding party. Decided to get my money's worth and wear the suit today," he replied.

"How much to rent the tuxedo?" I inquired, always conscious of costs.

"Fifty-five dollars," he replied.

"Ouch!" I said. "Does that include the



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

shoes?"

"No, \$13 extra," he said.

I then began to think about the cost involved in a wedding after you add a half dozen ushers or so and an equal number of bridesmaids. God knows what the bridal party's clothes cost. And the gown? Wow! It might be good Christianity to assist couples to elope, but make sure they're married in the church, of course.

My reaction to these expenditures stems from my constant concern for the poor in

the world. I sit in a comfortable easy chair, watching the TV presentation of the devastation and starvation in Bangladesh, in Iraq, in Ethiopia, in Sudan, in South America, and in the Philippines. We also have problems with poverty in our country. While I am ashamed to be so comfortable, at least I am concerned.

Most people are bombarded with requests by people from missions, hunger agencies, the local community, the diocese, and health-care facilities. There seems to be no end in these types of requests. But we cannot embrace the whole needy world. What can we do to share what we can?

The first thing to do is choose a few of the letters and drop the rest in the wastebasket. Depending on what we can afford, we should try to become regular donors to such organizations.

Since my last visit to the Kenyan missions, I have become conscious of the great potential for the church in Africa. Many people have sent donations. A woman from Webster has given me \$20 several times, saying, "I won this from the Finger Lakes Race Track."

Several parishes earmark some of the Sunday collection to selected charities. Some have adopted a poor parish in a foreign country. Father Paul J. Ryan told me that the Rochester diocese and the Diocese of Tabasco, Mexico, have become sister dioceses. Apparently our diocese has assisted Tabasco for several years.

Tabasco is the locale of the book, *The Power and the Glory*, by Graham Greene. Father Ryan, currently serving as pastor of the Cayuga Team Ministry, remains in regular contact with the Mexican diocese.

Here's my idea of a beautiful idea. A couple sent me \$500 for the missions accompanied by a note: "We had a wonderful vacation in the South, and want to share with any mission you wish."

Many years ago, I decided to give to charity the same amount I might spend on pleasure items such as vacations, restaurants and recreational events. This is not as noble as it may seem because I have no family to support. I live simply and economically. Most people with families can hardly do that, yet many are very generous with need causes.

So from my talk with Dana Lupo we move to the poor of the world. We have the opportunity to help.

God sent his only son to cleanse the sinful world

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 20:19-23; (R1) Acts 2:1-11; (R2) 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13.

One of the 12 labors of Hercules was to clean the Augean stables in one day. Augeas had thousands of cattle and their stalls had not been cleaned out in 30 years.

Hercules diverted the courses of a river (or two rivers) and made them flow through the stables, causing a great flood to wash out the filth in no time at all.

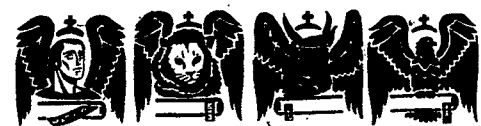
In much the same way, the filth of sin had piled up mountain high in the world, corrupting the hearts of men. A great washing was needed so God sent his son, like Hercules, to cleanse the sinful world. The son paid the wages of sin by his death and then unleashed the Holy Spirit like a mighty wind and a cleansing fire upon his church.

His coming was swift and sudden. Satan crawls, like a snake, but the spirit moves swiftly, like the wind. His coming was in answer to prayer: a novena, nine days of prayer. He always comes to those who really want him, and prayer shows that one really wants him.

His coming also transforms like fire. Before his coming, those in the Upper Room were just a number — 12 and 120. After his coming, they were apostles. Before he came they were fearful; after his coming they were courageous. They saw Jesus only as a man before; they saw him as God-made man after. They were still practicing Jews before; they were Christians after.

And this same Holy Spirit is operative today, especially in the sacraments of the church.

In baptism, he comes upon the soul as once he came upon Jesus at his baptism. He comes to cleanse the soul of sin, as the waters of the Jordan cleansed Naaman of his leprosy. Then he transforms the soul by sanctifying grace, as Christ was transfigured on Mt. Tabor. A person is so gifted by the spirit at baptism that one might



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

be a light to others: a Christian witness.

In confirmation he comes to strengthen so that one can live the faith. He empowers one to practice virtue so consistently that it develops into the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is a Christian personality: a person who is loving, peaceful, joyful, patient, kind, generous, faithful, gentle and self-disciplined. And if one perseveres in being this kind of person, the spirit causes his seven gifts to blossom into contemplation: the experience of God Himself, his touching the soul with the kiss of his love.

He also comes in every Mass. Before the consecration, he comes to make the risen Christ physically present under the appearances of bread and wine. After the consecration, he comes to make Christ present in his mystical body, the church. For the church is the sacrament of God's presence among men when it is a community of loving persons. And the spirit pours that love into the assembly at every Mass to make it that kind of a community.

Finally, he comes in the beautiful sacrament of reconciliation. Sin as always is divisive because it ruptures relationships between God and between people. The forgiveness of sin heals the rupture by reconciling God and man.

How much we need the Holy Spirit. We all need cleansing and strengthening. We all need to become loving persons, and to be reconciled. And all these things are the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, prayer to the Holy Spirit is imperative.

The following is a daily prayer I say to the Holy Spirit (for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit):

God, our Father, send your Holy Spirit upon me to help me and guide me.

Give me the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgment and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence.

Fill me with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence.

I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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