

# A few good questions raised during day of recollection

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

High Acres in Geneva is a beautiful estate donated to the Sisters of Mercy for religious gatherings. The Legion of Mary at St. Cecilia's Church in Rochester — as well as Sister Marie Therese Alaimo, SSND, pastoral assistant, and a parish committee — invited me to conduct a day of recollection at the center on May 8.

One highlight of the daylong retreat was a question/answer period, when people had a chance to air their grievances. The following is a sampling of some of the questions:

**Q:** What is the future of Catholic education? People have to be wealthy to send their children to Catholic school. The cost



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

is prohibitive for most of us:

**A:** The St. Thomas More Lawyers' Guild hosted a five-member panel on "The Future of Catholic Schools" on May 1. The panel included Father Peter Stravinskis, publisher of *Catholic Answers*; Brother Brian Walsh, CFC, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Rochester; Dr. Christopher Lasch, University of Roches-

ter professor and author of *The Culture of Narcissism*; Samuel Ognibene, a member of the St. Pius the Tenth Southwest Quadrant Task Force; and John Ochs, a school parent from St. Rita's Parish, Webster.

Father Stravinskis was the featured speaker. He offered 12 points regarding Catholic education, some of which are summarized by Rob Cullivan in the May 9 *Catholic Courier*.

Father Stravinskis declared that support of Catholic schools should not be placed exclusively on parents who have children in the schools. The entire parish should take on the responsibility, Father Stravinskis said.

The priest also stated that it was on this premise that the impressive Catholic

school system was built. "More than 100 years ago, penniless immigrants built and sustained the largest private school system known to man," Father Stravinskis said. "But the modern Catholic — more affluent than their ancestors — are suffering a crisis of faith which has hindered them from support of the Catholic schools."

The whole discussion by the five panelists and the question/answer period — which was too short for my liking — can be obtained by writing: Father L. James Callan, St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 4536 St. Paul Blvd., Rochester, N.Y., 14617, or by calling 716/342-2323. The videotape costs \$12 and the audiotape is \$4.

**Q:** How can anyone be a Catholic and pro-abortion?

**A:** I suppose the reasoning is the same for a not-very-devout hit man who takes on a contract but still considers himself a Catholic.

**Q:** Our young people are turned off from going to church. Doesn't it mean we need more church programs geared toward youths?

**A:** I don't know the answer to that question. The TV lately has been full of Madonna. I see thousands of young people TV carry on about her in wild adulation. Doesn't it seem that the home, schools and society in general are failing?

Older people may remember how Father Dan Lord, S.J., used to inspire the youths around the nation to real idealism. Trappist Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* brought a nationwide enthusiasm for religion. All is not lost, however. Although I am mystified by why so few youths enter religious life, many of our young people faithfully attend church.

And two of the most demanding religious communities, The Legionaries of Christ and Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, are attracting vocations.

## Trinity's mystery allows faithful to affirm belief

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Matthew 28:16-20; (R1) Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40; (R2) Romans 8:14-17.

Sunday is Trinity Sunday.

We get to know God by his works, deeds and words.

The works of God are his creations. He is a poor artist who cannot put something of himself into his work. The French critic Buffon once wrote: "The style is the man."

Studying the night skies while watching his sheep, David could rhapsodize: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:2). And Paul could tell the Romans that their paganism was inexcusable, because "ever since the creation of the world his invisible attributes ... have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made" (Rom. 1:20).

Moses pointed out the *magnalia Dei*, the great deeds of God, to the Hebrews in order to call them to fidelity. "Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, as you did?" Moses asked. "Did any god venture to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, ... as your God did for you in Egypt?" (R1).

By such acts as the manna and the quail in the desert, God showed he was a caring God. He was a God who despised slavery, a powerful God, a shepherd.

A second and even better way to know God is by his words. I can know Shakespeare by his plays, but I could get to know



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

him better by talking and listening to him over a stein of beer. So, even though we can know God by his works, we can get to know him better through his words.

God spoke to us. "In times past, God spoke in partial ways ..." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God." In a milieu of polytheism that was some revelation. "In these last days, He spoke to us through His son" (Hebrews 1:1).

This was the great revelation because we learned that in this one God there are three divine people. God is a trinity of people. Therefore, God is not a lonely God because he is a community of loving people.

The mystery of the Trinity is not how can there be three persons in one God. That is not a mystery. The nature of God is infinite. The mystery is in this: how can the son proceed from the father and the Holy Spirit from father and son and all three still be equal?

A lad explained this about the Trinity to his unbelieving dad. His dad said, "Now Johnny, you know that's all foolishness. I'm your father and you're my son. Didn't

I exist before you?"

The lad thought a moment, and then said, "But daddy you didn't become a father until I became a son."

If we cannot fully understand the Trinity, why did God reveal it?

First, the fact that God is not lonely tells us that our creation had to be an act of love. He didn't need us.

Secondly, if we are able to be in the image of God, the Trinity teaches us that we, too, must become a community of loving people.

Thirdly, heaven won't be a bore. Jesus likened it to a wedding to three people: the Father, who is life; the Son, who is truth; and the Holy Spirit, who is love. Life, love and truth is the least common denominator of happiness.

Lastly, the mystery of the Trinity gives us all a chance to make an act of faith; in other words, to say "I believe." Paradise was lost through a lack of faith, but it can be regained by an act of faith.

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The International Thomas Merton Society wishes to invite all members and other interested persons to attend this four-day program which will emphasize Merton's concern for God's creation in all its aspects. Participants from five countries, twenty-three U.S. states, and three Canadian provinces will make presentations on topics ranging from Merton's images, spirituality, and views on the human community, to analyses of his writings.

**General Sessions:**  
Arts Center, Nazareth College

June 14 9 a.m.—Canon A.M. Allchin, St. Theosevia Centre, Oxford, England  
3:30 p.m.—Anne E. Carr, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.  
7:30 p.m.—M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Mass.

June 15 9 a.m.—Joan Chittister, O.S.B., Mount St. Benedict Monastery, Erie, Pa.

Registration fee:  
ITMS Members—\$40 Single-day registration—\$20  
Non-members—\$50 Single general session—\$5  
Bahquet—\$12 (reservations required)

**For more information or to register, contact:**  
Dr. Christine M. Bochen, Secretary, ITMS

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