

Church in Africa continues to thrive on tapes

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

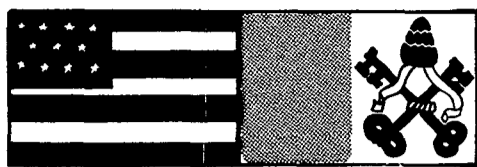
An enthusiast of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen told me: "What a joy to listen to Bishop Sheen's tapes. I haven't heard all 21 tapes, but will shortly. Thank you for making them available, and at such a low price."

Comment: It is a grace to be able to hear the voice and teachings of Bishop Sheen. Many of us priests might well sit down and listen to that great preacher to appreciate the power of the pause, distinct diction, deliberateness of delivery.

One priest I know rattles on so rapidly that he's hard to understand. Never a pause, he delivers a mile-a-minute deluge of words and never illustrates his points. We should learn from that master of rhetoric.

When I was in Africa in 1984, I gave Bishop Raphael Ndigni, an alumnus of St. John Fisher College, a few tapes I had brought along. Later he wrote a note of thanks — he is always correct about acknowledging gifts, a virtue we should all exercise — and requested as many as I might be able to send.

He wrote: "I use many of Bishop Sheen's ideas in my conferences to priests



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

and sisters."

Africans seem to have a special love for Bishop Sheen's messages. I wonder if the orthodoxy of the African bishops is a measure of why Africa has so many vocations to the sisterhoods and the priesthood.

The Sheen enthusiast: "I have been to Mass at churches where the words of the Bible are de-arranged, if there is such a word, by the 'Inclusive Language' fad. Fortunately we are not much afflicted in our own parish."

Comment: It's a pity but the church always has a core within her bosom to keep us patient if not humble. I am reminded of the "inclusive person" who was outraged at a neighbor's sign which read: "No dogs or bitches allowed."

The Sheen enthusiast: "Recently I won

\$50 in a tournament. Enclosed \$10 for anything you wish to use it for."

Comment: Sometimes people send me donations won from a horse race, cards and the like. All these games are quite legitimate, but they remind me of the story of a man with a shady past who went to his Irish pastor and said: "Father, you know my life, and you know that not all the money I have gotten came from honorable sources. Would you be willing to accept a donation of \$10,000 from me?"

The pastor promptly responded: "My friend, just hand it over. That money has been in bad company long enough. We'll use it for good."

Most donations and extras I receive go to the African missions, where the church is making great strides. And the African church could do even better if it had the means for education, schools, chapels and clinics.

From a former seminarian: "I am mystified at the enthusiasm over Father (Joseph) Girzone's *Joshua*. A woman stuck a copy into my hand and practically ordered me to read it. Of course she does consider me a retrograde. I did read it and am appalled that any Catholic should think this a good book. I consider it a bad book.

Why, it's positively anti-church."

Comment: A friend sent me a clipping of an analysis of *Joshua*, which reads: "Girzone's charge that the Catholic clergy made the religion of Jesus 'legalistic and superficial' was broadcast by reporter Bauer, along with Girzone's complaint that Christ's mission to the world was distorted by the clergy's 'endless rules and rituals' rather than the love of God.

"To Girzone, the Church is a 'police force' that oppresses people with stiff rules and unbending dogmas. He is undermining it by preaching a new religion in Catholic parishes based on 'kindness, forgiveness, compassion and understanding' and promoting the 'teachings' of a fictional Jesus who sounds like a clone of Mr. Rogers."

Father Girzone, a former Carmelite, used to be associated with Mt. Carmel High School in Auburn before it closed. Later he left the Carmelites and became a priest in the Albany diocese. He gave up pastoral work to go into writing, which has brought him phenomenal success.

He presents conferences in Catholic parishes, retreat houses and the like. He accepts no stipend for talking, but I suppose the sale of his books makes him quite independent.

God sent Jesus to be our bread of life

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:24-35; (R1) Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15; (R2) Ephesians 4:17, 20-24.

Holy Mass is built on twin pylons: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Together with the introduction ("The Introductory Rites") and the conclusion (The Concluding Rite), these four movements constitute the symphony of the Mass.

The multiplication of the loaves and fish in last Sunday's Gospel exemplified the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Jesus' explanation of the significance of the miracle of the loaves in this Sunday's Gospel typifies the Liturgy of the Word.

In his homily, Jesus told the people of a bread greater than material bread, a food that does not perish, but "remains unto life eternal."

Naturally, the earthly-minded people asked Jesus what they must do to obtain this food — a food that doesn't perish, a

food that gives eternal life to those who eat it. A veritable fountain of eternal youth, the desire of every person.

Jesus gave them a simple answer: "Have faith in me." All Jesus asked was that one have faith in him, accept his word and believe him.

Yet, after he multiplied loaves and fish and walked on water, they — in their blindness — asked for a sign so they could believe in him. "Moses," they said, "gave bread from heaven."

Jesus corrected them, "It wasn't Moses who gave your ancestors bread. It was my father in heaven who gave the manna." Then Jesus tried to drive home the point he wished to make; namely, that this same father was now giving them and all mankind a bread from heaven far greater than the manna: his only-begotten Son, himself. "I myself am the bread come down from heaven, the bread of life," he said.

He is the bread of life in a twofold sense: as truth-giver (the Liturgy of the Word) and life-giver (the Liturgy of the Eucha-

rist).

Thus just after instituting the most holy Eucharist, Jesus said to his apostles: "I am the way, the truth and the life." He was saying that the way to life is by way of truth, and that truth is no mere abstraction, but a person, himself, the eternal Word of God. So Paul, in the second reading, exhorted the newly baptized Ephesians to follow Christ because without him there is no going, no knowing, no living.

To give us this truth, Vatican II stated: "The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word" (Const. on Lit., # 51).

To make this possible, the church decided on three readings for each Sunday and adopted a three-year cycle for the Sunday readings: Year A, Year B and Year C. In Year A, Matthew's Gospel predominates; in Year B, Mark's; and in Year C, Luke's.

We are in Year B, the Marcan Year. Since Mark's Gospel is so brief, however,



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

it is supplemented for these five weeks by John's Gospel, Chapter 6. We are at this stage now.

In general the Gospel and the first reading harmonize. Therefore, next Sunday's first reading and the Gospel speak of manna — bread from heaven.

Two kinds of bread are available: the bread of this world and the bread of heaven. The bread of this world — our daily bread — is legitimate and necessary. Without neglecting it, we must desire more.

We must desire the bread of heaven: the bread of God's word which nourishes the soul. "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."

"Whoever believes has eternal life."

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