

Congress in Syracuse focuses on devotion

By Gary L. Smith
The Catholic Sun

SYRACUSE — *Courier* columnist Father Albert J.M. Shamon denounced the constitutional separation of church and state as a "godless Masonic tenet" during an Aug. 2 keynote address at the National Congress of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"The sacred cow of separation of church and state is a godless Masonic tenet used to separate God from the state, to put God out of politics, to banish religion from the nation," Father Shamon told an enthusiastic audience at the Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center in Liverpool, a suburb of Syracuse.

"Until there is a king acknowledged by all heads of state as above them and to be obeyed by them; until all nations acknowledge a moral law higher than all man-made laws; and until all 'isms' acknowledge the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of the family, the world situation will be hopeless," said Father Shamon, administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Church in Fleming.

In a 45-minute speech frequently interrupted by applause, Father Shamon told delegates to the congress that devotion to the Sacred Heart is three-dimensional — requiring commitment within the family, in the parish and in politics.

Father Shamon said this need for political involvement motivated him to support U.S. Supreme nominee Clarence Thomas, whose Catholic upbringing and reported belief in natural law have stirred controversy.

"On the political level, devotion to the Sacred Heart means we must re-evangelize the United States and Europe," Father Shamon told the congress. "It means we must work and pray for jurists who realize there is a law higher than the Constitution. That's why I've been praying for Thomas."

The theme of a world imperiled by vanishing values was echoed by other speakers at the Aug. 1-4 congress.

John Galten, director of the University of San Francisco's St. Ignatius Institute, described Western civilization as a society "running on fumes" of the values of previous eras.

"The values of life have been deteriorating. We have seen whole groups of people disenfranchised of their right to life. The Holy Father attributes this to the fact we have forgotten God. If God ceases to influence law and public policy, this is the kind of society you end up with," Galton told delegates. "This is the world we're going to have to evangelize."

While Knights of Columbus stood guard over a special chapel set up for 24-hour eucharistic adoration, congress speeches and

workshops focused on topics ranging from family life to evangelization with the poor. The agenda for Aug. 3 also included a 12-hour slate of activities for youths.

"This is a time for all of us to renew our dedication to the Lord Jesus and our determination to make Jesus known to a world which hungers and yearns for the word of the Lord," Syracuse Bishop Joseph T. O'Keefe said in remarks welcoming delegates to the congress.

More than 1,200 people attended the congress, which organizers said was the first national gathering of its kind in 13 years.

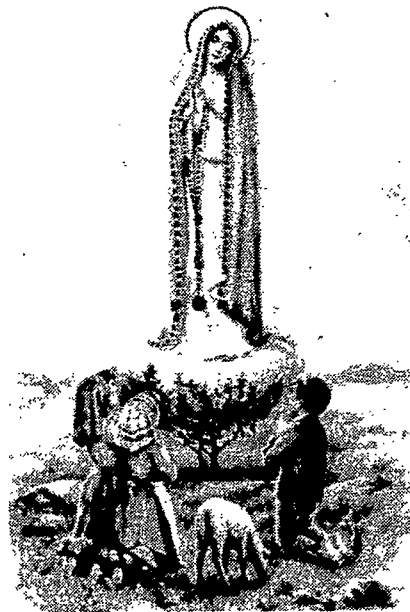
EDITORS' NOTE: Reprinted courtesy of The Catholic Sun, Syracuse diocesan newspaper.

A crew of students and faculty from Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, recorded and videotaped all of the congress sessions. For information on ordering tapes, call 1-800-783-3657.



AP/Wide World Photos
ABORTION ARRESTS — Father Edward Steinberger, of Schulte, Kan., is questioned by Wichita Police as he is arrested for trespassing at the Wichita Family Planning Clinic Aug. 3. The U.S. Justice Department told a Wichita federal judge Aug. 7 that he has no jurisdiction to order penalties against protesters attempting to keep abortion clinics closed. In a friend-of-the-court brief filed on behalf of Operation Rescue, the Justice Department said U.S. District Judge Patrick F. Kelly also erred in issuing specific instructions to federal marshals on enforcing his injunction that bars protesters from blocking entrances to two Wichita clinics.

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