

Petitions at Mass should be 'audible to all'

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Many older people may remember Father William Bergan, an Auburnian who gave up a promising baseball career to become a priest of the Diocese of Rochester.

He taught English at St. Andrew's Seminary in the 1920s. He became chaplain of the Auburn prison in the 1930s, before being named chancellor of the diocese and finally pastor of St. Monica's Church, which he served until his death in 1947.

I remember one Mother's Day when Father Bergan — who was a fine preacher — gave a sermon in Auburn, in which he quoted a poem by Kipling.

*If I were hanged on the highest hill/
I know whose love would come up to me still.
If I were drowned in the deepest sea/
I know whose love would come down to me.
If I were damned of body and soul/
I know whose love would make me whole.
Mother of mine. Mother of mine.*

This is a moving passage I have often

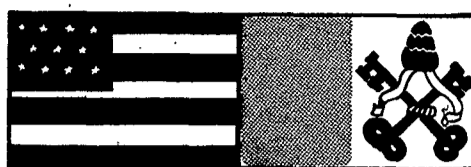
used in Mother's Day sermons.

Father William Ryan taught us public speaking when I attended St. Bernard's Seminary in the 1930s. We students remember his often repeated statement: "The essentials of good public speaking are three: correct pronunciation, clear articulation and full vowel value."

My memory of these two fine priests recently surged to the fore as I celebrated daily Mass for 60 people at a Rochester parish. After the homily, they would have the lector read out a list of petitions and — when he finished — members of the congregation would add their personal intentions. The people would then respond, "Lord, hear our prayer."

It has always exasperated me how petitions usually will mumble petitions, so no one can understand them, yet automatically all say, "Lord, hear our prayer."

Mindful of Father Ryan's admonition, "correct pronunciation, clear articulation, full vowel value," to which I would add "audible to all," I replied, "Now if you



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

are going to call out a petition, you should say it clearly and loudly, so all can understand."

Then, in the spirit of giving a ludicrous illustration, I said, "One might mumble that Bishop Clark will be hanged on the highest tree (from the Kipling poem), let us pray to the Lord."

Before I could finish the explanation, all responded vigorously: "Lord, hear our prayer."

Now the people certainly did not wish our bishop to be hanged on any tree — on the contrary, they hold him in reverence —

but the response was an automatic reflex, given without thought or concern.

After recovering from their response, I pointed out the need for clear articulation, full vowel value and audibility so people could reply with intelligence and meaning.

From such a story could leak out: "An elderly priest placed in petition the request to hang the bishop." It is not so, but it does make an interesting item for gossip.

Solicited petitions are rarely understood because people mumble and mumble — mainly due to shyness. During a recent Sunday Mass at St. Joseph's Church in Weedsport, part of the Northern Cayuga Cluster led by Fathers William B. Leone and Ronald P. Frederick, I discovered a simple solution.

Individual petitions, written in a notebook before Mass, are read clearly, distinctly and audibly by the lector. Then the congregation replies with some piety and intelligence, "Lord, hear our prayer."

Captain ignores St. Paul's warning before setting sail

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

The shipwreck of the Alexandria (as detailed by the captain).

I was already feeling uneasy before the Alexandria had even reached the port of Myra. The owners of the grain factory in Egypt had insisted on loading an extra large quantity of wheat despite my warning that it would hamper us. Their only consideration was profit. I had a crew and ship to consider.

Sea voyages that late in the year were risky. The weather was unpredictable and I wanted nothing to delay our safe passage to Rome. It was still several weeks before the storm season, but, for some unexplained reason, I felt a strange foreboding about this sailing.



THE BIBLE CORNER

It took several extra days to reach Myra because of the contrary winds. I hoped our stop in this port would be brief and uneventful.

As soon as I saw the commander of the Imperial Roman guard approaching, my uneasiness welled up again. "We will be coming aboard your vessel with several prisoners," he advised me.

I spoke my protests in vain. "We have a

full load already."

"What time do you sail?" he asked, ignoring my remark.

"At first light," I said as he turned on his heel. I sighed heavily as he did so, knowing that we were in Roman territory now. It was fully his right to do what he had requested. But prisoners on any sea voyage were considered bad luck.

Only four prisoners came aboard just before dawn with Commander Julius. They didn't seem at all dangerous. I even overheard Julius speaking in very friendly terms to the one he called Paul.

Just before we embarked, Commander Julius said to me, "Don't worry, captain, there's no threat of mutiny from these prisoners. Two are thieves and one has a religious dispute with the Jews back in Jerusalem. The other one is that man's companion."

"Is Paul the one with the religious problem?" I asked.

"Yes, he is a Roman citizen and has appealed his case all of the way to the emperor," Julius told me. "How long will it take us to sail to Rome?"

"At least three weeks," I replied, "if the winds are with us."

From the onset, the Alexandria was running against the contrary winds. We sailed so slowly that I finally navigated along the coast of the island of Crete, where we were somewhat protected from the adverse winds that were blowing us off course.

When we reached Fair Haven, I decided to stop and wait for more favorable winds. We had already lost so much time that I feared going much farther before the storm

season. It would be foolhardy to attempt to cross the high seas this late in the year.

A couple of days later, however, a warm gentle wind was blowing and I prepared to set sail for Phoenix. It was only a little farther up the coast and would be a good place to winter if we were forced to delay again.

"Stop, it is not in our best interest to go on," I heard someone say.

I looked in the direction of the comment. Had it been Julius who had voiced this concern, I might have given it some thought. But the man who had spoken was Paul. I ignored him and kept at my task at hand.

Paul remained determined to be heard. After he made his statement a second time, a few of the crew members stopped to listen.

"I think we should stay in Fair Haven for the winter," said Paul. "If we continue, I fear we shall not only lose our cargo, but our lives will be in danger, too."

I glared at the prisoner and bolted over to where Julius seemed to be taking in the whole scene with mild amusement. "What gives him the right?!"

"Don't take him so seriously," Julius said calmly. "You are the captain of this ship. What do you say?"

"The Alexandria will leave at once," I said.

I had won my point as captain. Why did I feel so grim inside as I watched Fair Haven slowly disappear from sight?

(Continued next week.)
Scripture reference: Acts, Chapter 27:1-12.

DIOCESAN APPOINTMENTS



Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments:

Father Robert Grzybowski, OFM Conv. from guardian and pastor of St. Casimir Friary and Parish in Riverside, N.J., to pastor of St. Hyacinth Polish Roman Catholic Church in Auburn, effective Aug. 20.

Father Edwin B. Metzger from Maryknoll Associate at Buru Buru Parish in

Nairobi, Kenya, to Maryknoll Associate at St. Jude Catholic Church, P.O. Box 65, Athi River, Kenya.

Deacon David Palma from deacon intern to parish deacon at St. Anne Church, Palmyra, and St. Gregory Church in Marion, effective July 1, 1991.

Father David Stopyra, OFM Conv. from pastor of St. Hyacinth Polish Roman Catholic Church in Auburn to guardian of Ss. Justin and Francis Friary and pastor of St. Francis Parish in Athol Springs, N.Y., effective Aug. 20.

Deacon Victor M. Yanaitis from parish deacon at St. Joseph Church in Rush to parish deacon at Church of the Annunciation in Rochester, effective Sept. 1.

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