

Catechism should be used as a supplement

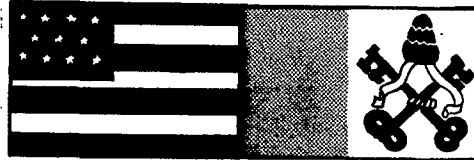
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Father Paul J. Ryan asked me to assist with Masses at the Cayuga Team Ministry parishes the weekend of Oct. 19-20. My responsibilities included one Mass at each parish: St. Joseph's in Cayuga and St. Patrick's in Aurora on Saturday night; St. Michael's in Union Springs and Our Lady of the Lake in King Ferry on Sunday morning.

Sister Pat Flass, who serves as religious education director, lives at the rectory in King Ferry. Sister Jacqueline Robinson, the director of development at DeSales High School in Geneva, resides in the rectory in Cayuga. Deacon John Prave and his wife Karen reside in Union Springs.

As I rolled into Aurora about 2:30 p.m. Oct. 19, I noticed some activity going on at the parish hall, located beneath the church.

What I saw was a nice surprise. A collection of babies and youngsters



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

from aged 5 to 10 were having a Halloween party. They had been out collecting pumpkins, and each child had painted a smiling face on a pumpkin. They were all munching cookies and drinking cider.

After greeting the parents and children I noticed two young women in their early 20s, sitting and admiring the children. I pulled up a chair, introduced myself and asked: "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

They turned out to be Brigid Sheehy and Lea Egan, both students at Wells College in Aurora. They were assisting

some of the parents with the party.

As is my wont, I asked about the state of the church at Wells. I then observed: "People your age have been deprived of a great deal by the dropping of the catechism. The catechism gave a concise, clear definition of our faith. I have talked with many collegians, some from Catholic colleges. Their knowledge of their religion is awfully vague."

"The problem seems to be the inadequacy of many religion textbooks," I said. "With the catechism we had clarity and conciseness. For example, why did God make you? God made me to know Him, to love Him."

Brigid chimed in, "To serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in heaven."

Astonished I exclaimed: "How did you know that?"

Brigid replied: "My mother taught me that when I was 4-years-old." What a tribute to a mother!

The enemies of the catechism — and

there are many — claim: "Children just memorize definitions but they do not know what they mean. It's just memory drill."

I respond, "Of course children do not realize the full import of the definitions. But they do in their 20s, as is the case with Brigid. These concise truths are stored in the memories to draw upon all their lives."

The catechism is not supposed to be the sole book of instruction. It should be used as a supplement with the best of contemporaneous catechetics, including church history, the documents of Vatican II, examples from nature, and, of course, the Bible. The use of the catechism should be in conjunction with these.

The non-profit Catechism, Morality, Decency Apostolate offers a free catechism to those who send a self-addressed, double-stamped (52 cents) envelope (9X4). The address is: CMD Apostolate, P.O. Box 52, Brooklyn, N.Y., 11209.

The Hebrews learn to look forward with faith in God

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

After the Hebrews journeyed two days into the wilderness, memories of their years of slavery faded as quickly as the city of Ramses — with its towering buildings — slipped from view. As they ventured out in the open, it seemed like a dream.

"What will this Promised Land be like?" they asked Moses.

"The land is fertile, and everyone will have plenty to eat," he answered.

"But how will we find this place?" someone asked.

"You must follow me," Moses said. "But it will be the Lord who will be leading us to our new home. And you must never become discouraged along the way."

The Lord's guidance was astonishing even to Moses. During the day, a huge cloud went before them in the wilderness. And at night, a pillar of fire lit their path. They were required only to keep going when the cloud or fire moved. And when either stopped, they camped.

The people no longer looked back during their journey. But if they had, they

might have seen the spies Pharaoh sent to find them.

"How can these Hebrews be two days journey from Egypt?" Pharaoh asked the spies when they reported back. "I gave them permission to take only three days to go and sacrifice to their God. Even if they left to return now, that is four days!"

"Your highness, these Hebrews have no intention of returning here to serve as your slaves," one of the spies said.

"Why should they come back here when they have taken with them our country's silver and gold?" another added.

"After them!" Pharaoh ordered.

Pharaoh himself led the chase into the desert. He chose his best army officers as well as 600 soldiers to drive the chariots.

Meanwhile, with the Lord's cloud stopped before them, the Hebrews camped in front of the Red Sea. When they first heard the pounding of chariot wheels, they mistook it for the sound of waves crashing on the shore.

But as Pharaoh's army drew closer, a great cloud of dust swirled in its wake. "Look, in the distance! Someone is coming!" the people cried. "The Egyptians are coming, and we are trapped with no way out!"



"Don't worry, the Lord will save us," Moses replied, trying in vain to calm them.

"How can God save us? The sea is before us, and the Pharaoh's army will overtake us!" the Hebrews cried. "We never should have left Egypt. Better to live as slaves than to be slaughtered out here in the wilderness!"

"Have you forgotten so quickly all the miracles you witnessed in your slavery?" Moses challenged.

Then someone shouted that the Lord's cloud was moving. It moved to the rear of the Hebrew camp and suddenly stopped. The cloud concealed the Hebrews from the approaching army, and finally they settled into bewildered silence.

"The Lord will fight for you here, too," Moses told them. "Stop looking back and go forward with faith in God's promise."

Moses stretched out his staff in front of the Red Sea. As he did so, a gusty wind came up with such a force that the sea's water began to separate. Soon walls of water had formed on two sides, making a path in the middle of the Red Sea.

"Come, march through!" Moses ordered the people.

As the Hebrews passed through the dry sea bottom, the cloud again moved from the rear to the front of their procession.

At first, Pharaoh and his officers were stunned by what they saw. But when the king realized his slaves were escaping, he ordered the soldiers: "Get them!"

The charioteers were the first to sense the impending doom. As soon as they started on the path through the sea, their chariot wheels became mired in mud. "It's no use!" they shouted. "Their God is against us!"

But even as they turned to run, abandoning their chariots, the sea was already closing in on them. For his part, Pharaoh was helpless to do anything as he watched his entire army drown in the Red Sea.

Scripture Reference: Exodus, Chapter 13:17 and Chapter 14.

Meditation: Stop looking back! Go forward with faith!

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