

Pastor's work bears many fruits

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Father Robert Smith is pastor of the Community of the Blessed Trinity — St. Mary Magdalene Church in Wolcott, St. Thomas in Red Creek, and St. Jude Chapel in Fair Haven (for the summer folks).

A gifted musician, he was once the choir master at St. Bernard's Seminary. In September he phoned: "I am having surgery in October and will be out of circulation for seven weeks." So he asked me to help out the weekend of Nov. 23-24.

The schedule was simple: 4 p.m. Mass Saturday at Wolcott, and 5:30 p.m. at Red Creek, located some six miles away. After Mass, a parishioner from Wolcott led me to Red Creek since it was pitch dark. He just said: "Follow me."

I wondered why he was driving 65-to-70 mph on Route 104. Finally I realized he was in back of me, so I slowed down to have him go ahead. We arrived ahead of time. Sunday Masses are 8:30 a.m. at Red Creek and 10:30 a.m. in Wolcott.

Both parishes are well organized. I picked up a healthy interest in the church from parishioners. An ing-

enuous little altar boy — he looked about 10 years old — was serving at Red Creek. I asked: "What is your name?" He replied: "James, but you can call me 'Jim.' All my friends do." Both parishes manifest the results of Father Smith's musical expertise.

It was good to meet many friends of yesterday — from North Rose, Webster and Rochester. One young lady announced: "You baptized me in Clyde. I was a Foro from North Rose."

Usually when I go to a parish for the first time, and I am the only priest to have the pulpit, I give an instruction on prayer. I also circulate a basic prayer book, entitled *Treasury of Prayers*. I sell four of them for \$1. Many Catholics are ill instructed and do not know their prayers. This accounts for the frightful leakage from the church and a dismal apathy leaving many indifferent to Mass and the faith.

The instruction on prayer is concise. "What is prayer? Why we pray. How to pray."

When the revolution began in the church, fancy liturgists badgered our people to throw away their prayer books. It never occurred to

them that the psalms are a prayer book, and that the priest is obligated to read his breviary every day for the welfare of his people.

The instruction continues: "Many children, including teen-agers, do not know even the ordinary Catholic prayers. I offer today a small prayer book, *Treasury of Prayers*, four for one dollar. One is good. Four are better."

Between the two parishes more than 400 prayer books are floating around. They can now be found locally as well as in the military, colleges and among friends and relatives. Shocked grandparents especially buy them when they realize that their grandchildren do not know the ordinary prayers.

I also discovered another interesting note. A small church with a compact congregation is ideal for giving an informal instruction. The priest and people are close together and this intimacy can give a dialogic touch. While explaining contrition I touch on the seven capital sins. I abruptly said: "One dollar to the first person who can recite them." There was a dead pause.

Suddenly on the left side of the congregation, Jean Bates raised her



hand and proclaimed: "Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth." Delighted I asked: "How is it you know them?"

She replied, "I went 16 years to parochial school at Red Bank, New Jersey, and did my nurses training at St. Vincent's Hospital, New York."

I hope today's Catholic schools can produce such Catholics. As I repeated them, I noticed many people saying them with me.

God created us to fill with blessings

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 3:10-18; (R1) Zephaniah 3:14-18; (R2) Philippians 4:4-7.

Next Sunday — used to be called "Gaudete Sunday" (Sunday of Joy) in the old church calendar. The overall theme of joy still pervades the readings: "Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!" (R1); "Rejoice in the Lord always!" (R2); "... he preached good news to the people ... full of anticipation, wondering" (R3).

Advent is meant to help us prepare for that coming. The crowds asked John the Baptizer, "What ought we to do?" His answer was not innovative, nor radical. He simply repeated Jewish teaching: "Share with others your possessions, your food" (Is. 58:7). No ifs or ands, just do it.

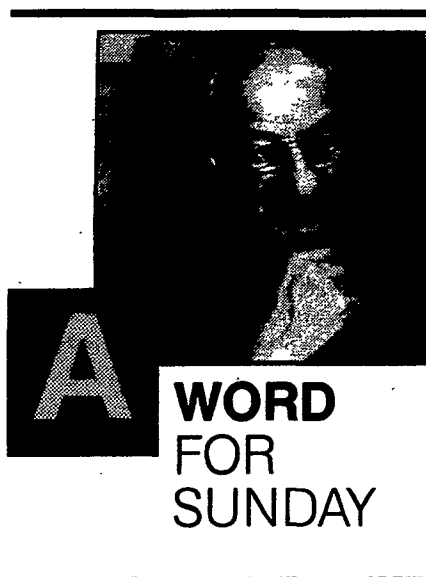
Tax collectors came and said, "Teacher, what are we to do?" Again his answer was surprisingly simple. He didn't tell them to give

up tax collecting; taxes are a necessary evil. He said in effect, "Be just! Exact nothing over and above your fixed amount."

Soldiers likewise asked him, "What about us?" To the discomfit of pacifists, John did not say to give up soldiering. Again the military are a necessity. Three times in the Acts of the apostles, Roman soldiers saved the life of St. Paul. John said to them: "Don't bully anyone; don't throw your weight around. Denounce no one falsely, to curry favor. Be content with your pay; don't seek bribes."

John spoke with such clarity and fearlessness that his listeners began to wonder whether or not John might be the Messiah. With the forthrightness of a prophet John fiercely squelched the thought. The Messiah, he implied, would not be just a talker, but a judge — one who would separate the good from the bad. His conclusion, therefore, was for people to get ready and repent!

One day when I was catechizing



school kids, I put a glass upside down on a pie tin. I asked them about the purpose of the glass. They answered that it was a glass to drink water or juices. I had some orange juice with me, and I asked if anyone would like a glass of orange juice. Someone wanted a drink, so I

poured some orange juice into the upside down glass. Naturally, the orange juice ran all over the pie tin.

I asked the children what was wrong. They said, "Father, you've got to turn the glass over if it is going to hold any liquid."

"Oh," I answered, "you're right." I turned the glass over and filled it.

We are like the glass. God created us for many things, especially to fill us with His blessings. But too often we turn away from God, and like the upside down glass, He cannot fill us with His love, His Holy Spirit. In order for God to use us, we must "turn over" our lives to Him — we must repent.

We do this especially by monthly confession. When we do this, we open up our lives to Him and He in turn pours into our lives His many marvelous graces. That is why He came at Christmas: to give us gifts, especially the greatest present — Himself. But we must be open. We must turn over ourselves to Him and repent.

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