

# Move along the road of faith

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 22:14-23:56; (R1) Isaiah 50:4-7; (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.

Holy Week starts on Passion Sunday for many people. Actually, it is the final Sunday of the Lenten season, which ends on the Wednesday preceding the Thursday of the Lord's Supper.

The first reading is taken from the suffering servant poems. Four of these poems are awkwardly inserted into the work of second Isaiah (Isaiah, chapters 40-55).

The suffering servant answers the perplexing question: Why do the innocent suffer, like Jeremiah and Ezechiel? His answer is that suffering can be vicarious: "in expiation for the sins of others."

He also knows that in the end God will exalt him, therefore, "I have not rebelled. But I have set my face like flint (to embrace the cross), knowing that I shall not be put to shame" (R1).

No doubt Jesus found in the servant's teaching much strength to accept His passion and death. Thus, Luke tells us that when the time for

His passion came, "He set his face like flint to journey toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

The Pauline passage in the second reading was probably an early hymn to the emptying (*kenosis*) and glorification of Jesus. St. Paul declared that our love should have self-renouncement in it like that of Jesus.

When the priest says at the end of Mass, "Go to love and serve the Lord," he means, "Go to love the Lord by serving our neighbor and to serve the Lord by loving our neighbor."

According to Luke's account, Jesus' passion and death is the final revelation of God's love and mercy. Luke, whom Dante called "the scribe of the gentleness of Christ" (*scriba mansuetudinis Christi*), softens the Passion story much more than the other synoptic writers.

Luke tends to be less critical of the disciples' activities during the Passion. He omits the fact that the apostles slept three times and fled Gethsemane. Judas' betrayal is glossed over. Peter's swearing at his denial is not mentioned.

Even Jesus' enemies are depicted in less hostile terms. We are not told

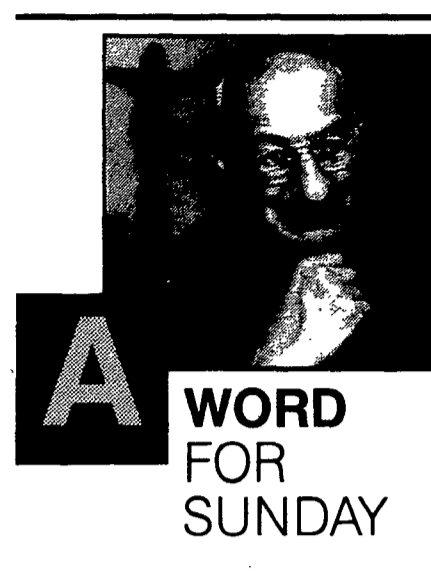
that they spat on Jesus or bound Him to bring Him to Pilate. Calvary is tempered by the fact that Jesus' friends are there.

So in the glow of the great pardon of the cross, practically everyone is absolved. Jesus heals the severed ear of an enemy. Peter repents of his betrayal. The thief is pardoned. The centurion is converted to believe that Jesus is innocent. Even Herod and Pilate are reconciled on Good Friday. All these are fruits of the cross.

Luke alone gives details depicting Jesus as the merciful and loving Messiah — details not given by the other synoptics. In Luke, Jesus prays for His tormentors. He gives paradise to the thief. He speaks no words of abandonment, only words of trust, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Sunday's Liturgy of the Word is so rich and self-explanatory that little commentary is needed. It would be more helpful to participate actively in the Sunday celebration.

Demonstrations are commonplace today. Generally, they express protest of some kind. Sunday we gather together for a procession, re-



**A** WORD FOR SUNDAY

calling Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

He was proclaimed king by people who hoped He would liberate them from Roman oppression. In effect, He liberated mankind from the more terrible oppression of sin.

In joining the procession Sunday, decide to move along the road of faith — even when it means carrying a cross. Do not fear to do so, for as He was victorious over death, so shall we be. This is our joyful hope.



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