

Christians must shoulder tasks

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 10:27-30; (R1) Acts 13:14, 43-52; (R2) Revelation 7:9, 14-17.

The book of Revelation tells us where the church is heading: to a land where crowds no one can number shall never hunger or thirst, where every tear will be wiped from their eyes (R2).

That is where we are headed: eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive the things that God has prepared for those who love Him.

That is where we are headed. But how are we to get there? The Acts tell us how: through accepting the Word of God preached by the church of Paul (R1).

In spite of fierce and often cruel persecution that word was preached over the Roman empire. The response was so great that by the end of the second century, Tertullian wrote "the outcry is that the state is filled with Christians — that they are in the fields; in the cities ... people of both sexes, every age and status, even those of high rank, are passing over to the profession of the

Christian faith."

Is that happening today? I think not. We must shoulder three tasks as Christians:

1. Our first task is *maintenance* — not a very exciting but a vital word. We are supposed to build up the body of Christ, His Church. After all we have been the recipients of the most remarkable heritage in all the world: the Catholic faith.

What sacrifices others have made to pass this heritage on to us. We must carry on their work. The torch is thrown to us. Do I read the word of God daily in the Scriptures? Do I receive the sacraments frequently? Do I pray daily? Are we carrying out what Christ has given us?

2. The second task is *ministry*. "See how those Christians love one another." That has always been the church's witness in an unloving world. No man is an island. We need one another. We need to serve others.

Every church needs to beware of both dogs and donkeys. A pack of dogs was sent out to do war with some wolves. The wolves sent out a scouting party to check on the dogs. The scouts reported back that there was nothing to worry about, be-

cause the dogs were nipping, snarling and biting at each other.

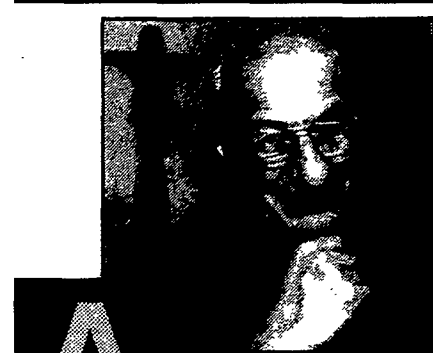
When thoroughbred horses are attacked, they face each other and kick out toward the enemy. And when donkeys are attacked, they form a circle facing outward and kick each other.

The church cannot afford petty bickering and backbiting, like that against Paul at Antioch.

3. And the third task is *mission*. We were not called by God for privilege, but for mission — to be "a light to the nations."

Once there was a seaside town proud of its rescue squad. Whenever a shipwreck occurred on the jagged rocks that protruded along the coast, the squad would quickly man boats and aid the stranded travelers no matter what the danger.

In appreciation, the town built a rescue station for the dedicated crew on the edge of the sea. They furnished it with the latest in rescue equipment and offered opportunities for the best training in rescue techniques. Their faith in their rescue squad was not in vain. For years the committed crew saved many lives.

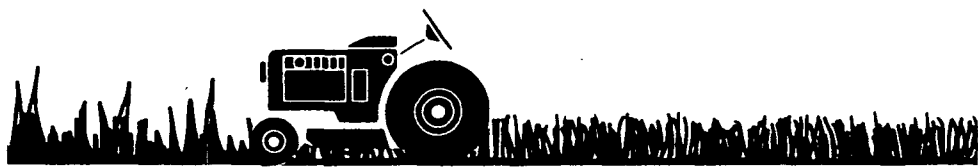


A WORD FOR SUNDAY

As time went on, however, new furnishings were added: thick carpets, plush chairs, television, bar, kitchen. Soon the rescue station became more and more a social club. When the alarm sounded, fewer and fewer members responded.

Need I spell out the implications? Those who stand before the God's throne are the ones who have survived the great period of trial: maintaining the faith; ministering to others; and evangelizing.

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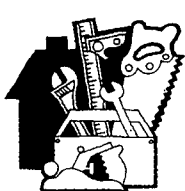
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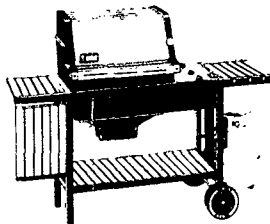
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