

One cannot serve two masters

Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 12:49-53; (R1) Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10; (R2) Hebrews 12:1-4.

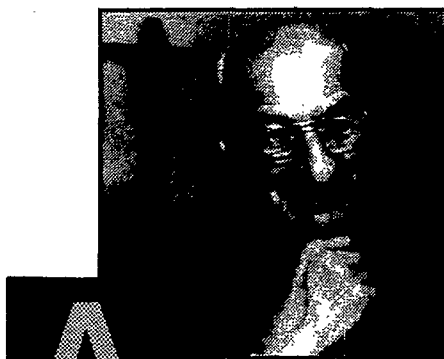
One word that might sum up the message in Sunday's readings is "division." Jeremiah caused division in Jerusalem. Our Lord said, "I have come for division. From now on, a household of five will be divided ..."

You may wonder how this can be, since Christ is the King of Peace, the One who has come to bring peace.

Two kinds of peace exist: inner peace and outer peace. Inner peace is peace of the heart, peace of soul — the contentment, the inner satisfaction, that comes from doing what is right. Christ promised this peace to all His followers when He said, "My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you."

Outer peace is societal peace, harmony with the world, getting along with others. Christ never promised this kind of peace. In fact, He prophesied the very opposite. "If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, ... the world hates you" (John 16:19).

Christ has His standards and the



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world has its own. He has His cross; the world has its conveniences. One cannot serve both masters.

The world hates two classes of people: the very bad, and the very good. She crucifies the very bad — such as the two thieves on the cross — because they destroy society's peace. She crucifies the very good — such as Christ — because He disturbs her soul's peace.

Chapters 37-45 in the book of Jeremiah are called "The Passion of Jeremiah" — the climax of his life of suf-

fering. When Jeremiah spoke the truth that Jerusalem would be destroyed if it rebelled against Babylon (588 B.C.), the War Party threw him into a muddy cistern. He would have perished had it not been for the Ethiopian eunuch, Ebedmelech. Jeremiah suffered simply because he spoke what God had commanded him to speak.

Jeremiah symbolized what would happen to Christ, because He too spoke the truth. "I have come to light a fire on the earth." Most likely, the fire was that of judgment, dividing the good from the bad.

This fire would be ignited by Christ's baptism — His crucifixion. It would also cause a baptism of fire in His followers: persecutions dividing loved ones and tearing society apart.

Here are examples of what some sacrificed for Christ: St. Perpetua had to turn her back on her father, husband and child in order not to deny Him; St. Francis of Assisi renounced his father on earth for a Father in heaven; St. Clare gave up title, wealth and kinsmen to become the bride of Christ.

St. Jane Frances de Chantal literally had to step over her son's body to enter religious life; and St. Thomas

More preferred the Tower of London and the executioner's ax to family and fame.

Truly, Christ is a sign that will be contradicted, set for the rise and fall of many, set for division. Who is not with me is against me.

Worldlings do not like what the church has to say. She disturbs consciences on such things as abortion and artificial contraception. Therefore, crush the infamous thing.

If the Gospel began and ended with a comforting "stay as you are" message, it would be embraced everywhere.

The Gospel, however, is uncompromising, demanding a change of heart and a total commitment to Christ. It is a sword, dividing the good from the bad.

It is also a Promethean gospel, bringing a fire from heaven that enkindles the hate of destruction in those who reject it, but cleanses, purifies and transforms those who accept it.

God hates peace in those destined for war. He has put a sword in our hands, not to plunge outward to our neighbors, but to thrust inward to cut away worldliness from our hearts.

Encyclicals are vague concerning work

Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Syndicated columnist

"A social doctrine has to be translated into reality and not just merely formulated. This is particularly true of the Christian social doctrine whose light is Truth, its objective Justice and its driving force Love," taught Pope John XXIII in his encyclical (*Mater et Magistra* (Mother and Teacher)).

The problem with most papal teaching on work is that it is often abstract, idealistic and even obtuse. The popes have tended to speak in generalities about work and have been hesitant at best to give specific advice in resolving workplace issues.

Pope Pius XI, for example, noted that the church's moral authority does not reside "... in technical matters, for which she has neither the equipment nor the mission." Pope Leo XIII said: "We do not feel that the precise character in all details which the aforementioned direction and organization of associations ought to have can be determined by



FAITH AND WORK

fast and fixed rules ..."

The popes' hesitancy and ambiguity is — in many ways — healthy. They have realized that they do not have all the answers, recognizing that it is primarily the laity's role to determine the best solutions to specific economic problems.

That is why Michael Naughton's new book, *The Good Stewards: Practi-*

cal Applications of the Papal Social Vision of Work (University Press of America, Inc., Lanham, Md.) is such an important contribution to those trying to apply Catholic social thought in the workplace.

"The principles the popes have enunciated in the last one hundred years specifically direct how work should be understood, and how a workplace should be organized," argues Naughton, a professor in the departments of theology and management at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn.

He offers a variety of specific workplace initiatives, which he considers logical and practical applications of papal teaching on work:

Regarding remuneration, he suggests such programs as "gainsharing," whereby employees earn rewards for the improved productivity of the individual worker or work team, and employee stock ownership plans, in which employees actually purchase their companies.

Under process, Naughton argues for such experiments as "quality circles," in which employees are

involved in the decision-making process to improve quality and productivity, and "work teams," which create permanent group structures in the workplace.

Concerning product, Naughton promotes programs that focus on the quality and moral content of what is produced and concern for the products' social costs — including their environmental effects.

Obviously, such specific applications of papal social teaching are controversial and debatable. As Naughton himself notes, "The implementation of the specific programs suggested here may prove impractical in certain situations."

"Nonetheless," he insists, "as the Catholic social tradition has developed, the burden of proof that a particular ... program could not work has come to rest on the employer, especially the Catholic employer."

My fellow business people may not appreciate Naughton's conclusions, but they should certainly be provoked by them — which is more than they usually are by papal pronouncements.

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