

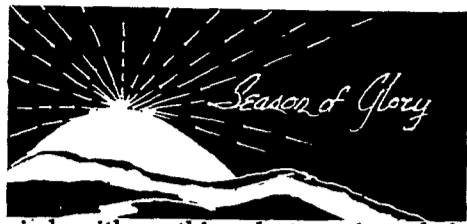
Passages reveal disciples' varying attitudes

By Father Robert J. Kennedy
Guest contributor

If Luke the evangelist had been a musician instead of a writer, we would have to say that he had composed a rhapsody when he wrote of the first Christian community (Acts 2:42-47, second Sunday of Easter).

He describes with lyrical, soaring phrases the community of the risen Christ as loving and single-hearted, united in their attention to the Apostle's teaching, the breaking of bread and communal daily prayer. Almost incredibly, "those who believed shared all things in common ... dividing everything on the basis of each one's need." This passage's "music" transports listeners into a vision of the ideal community of Christian disciples.

Far different is the portrait of the disciples in the gospel reading (John 20:19-31). Here the band of disciples is united only by its fear. Cowering behind locked doors, they are preoccu-



pied with nothing but saving their own skin. No wonder Thomas doubted!

"We have seen the Lord," they said to him, yet they remained locked away in fear. Thomas intuitively knew that if one truly experiences the risen Lord, one is transformed. And nowhere in the lives of his fellow disciples did he see any change that would lead him to believe that Jesus was alive. Perhaps his response could be paraphrased this way: "Not until I see you willing to risk your lives as Jesus did, will I know that he is alive."

Yet a third portrait of the community of the risen Christ can be found in Sunday's liturgy: the persecuted and suffering church which Peter address-

es in his first epistle (1 Peter 1:3-9). This fledgling community of newly baptized followers discovers early on that living the Christian faith is neither popular nor easy. And so to encourage them in faith Peter preaches that the power of their new birth in the risen Christ is stronger than the power of persecution and death.

Three portraits of the community of the risen Christ are presented in the Scriptures for the Second Sunday of Easter: the unified and harmonious commune, the terror-stricken hideaways, and the persecuted minority. What is their relationship? How do they affect our celebration of the Easter season?

The fear-filled disciples in the upper room, of course, can be forgiven because they are meeting the risen Christ and receiving his Holy Spirit only in that moment. The other two portraits indicate how well the community of disciples responded to the gift of risen life they received. Indeed they testify

that the Christian faith is lived credibly by courageous witness in the face of suffering and death and by unity of mind and heart in Christ.

And that is the challenge for the contemporary community of the risen Christ. We may congratulate ourselves on how far we are from that first fearful group on Easter night, but are we? Fear and lack of trust in the Spirit's power can paralyze our witness to the risen One and impede the creative, life-giving work He must still do in the world.

In any event, the measure of our credibility — as parish, diocese and church — remains the unity and harmony of our life together and the courage with which we witness as a community to our faith.

Will people believe us when we proclaim: "We have seen the Lord?"

Father Kennedy is assistant professor of liturgical studies at St. Bernard's Institute.

Tier hospital names medical affairs VP

ELMIRA — Dr. Norman Lindenmuth has been named vice president of medical affairs at St. Joseph's Hospital, 555 E. Market St. Lindenmuth will begin his new duties on June 1, 1993. He is currently a board certified internist for a group practice in Penn Yan.

He has held a variety of positions since 1979 at the Penn Yan-based Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital. Among his duties were quality assurance physician, utilization review physician, medical records committee chairman and medical staff president.

Lindenmuth has also served in a part-time capacity since 1988 as medical director at Soldiers and Sailors Hospital. In addition, he held part-time responsibilities in 1990 and 1991 as medical director at Bath's Ira Davenport Hospital.

Lindenmuth is a graduate of the Thomas Jefferson University School of Medicine. He completed his internship and residence at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester.

Organization hopes Rochester joins list

ELMIRA — His organization is unfamiliar to most people in the Rochester diocese, but his message is one based on common themes.

"Our Lady's messages are theologically sound; they have been for 2,000 years," said Ray Burke, vice president of Medjugorje in America. "If they weren't, the (Catholic) church would have shut us down. We're not out to create anything new. We're just trying to take some old messages and create a fresh impetus."

Medjugorje in America currently has membership in 90 dioceses and 31 states. And Burke is hoping to add the Diocese of Rochester to that list following his appearance at St. Casimir Church, 1004 Davis St.

Burke is scheduled to introduce Medjugorje in America's program this coming Friday, April 16, at 8 p.m. His presentation will be preceded by a Divine Mercy Novena and rosary.

According to its mission statement, Medjugorje in America focuses on three primary goals: emphasizing the importance of daily Mass; encouraging

frequent reception of the holy Eucharist and sacrament of reconciliation; and advocating one hour of eucharistic adoration per week.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from his organization's main offices in Fitchburg, Mass., Burke explained that these priorities are reinforced through implementation of a networking system.

This set-up typically begins with the establishment of a person, or small group of people, as diocesan directors. Then a network of coordinators is developed to create several ministry programs within each parish. Among these programs are Marian devotion, pro-life movements, youth activities, and vocations.

Burke became involved with Medjugorje in America following his 1988 journey to Medjugorje, a small town in the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"I had some incredible experiences and came back on fire. In my heart, I knew I had to share these experiences," he recalled.

The 47-year-old Burke is a painter by trade and father of eight. He is also a

recovering alcoholic who experienced a conversion in 1985. He noted that in his speeches, he frequently refers to the events leading to his conversion.

"I share my witness to show that there is hope. That's what (Medjugorje in America) is all about, and what the Catholic faith is all about — hope," remarked Burke.

Burke emphasized that — despite its title — Medjugorje in America should not be perceived as a group organizing pilgrimages to the place where a number of Marian apparitions are purported to have occurred during the last 11 years.

Burke added, however, that he knows of people who have gone on recent trips to Medjugorje, despite the town's proximity to several war-torn regions of Bosnia.

— Mike Latona

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