

We never get away with anything

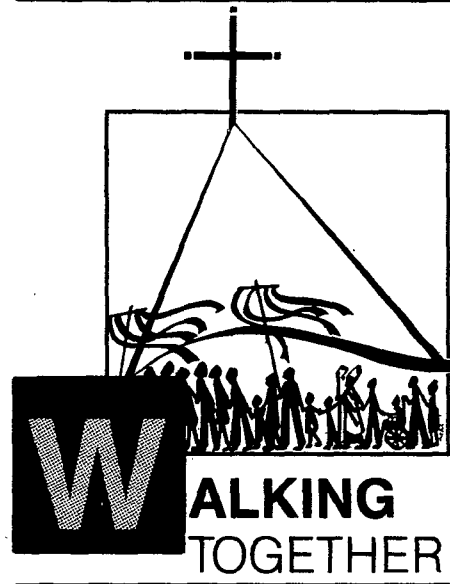
By Father Joseph A. Hart
Guest contributor

In his recent biography of John F. Kennedy, Nigel Hamilton notes that the young future president was more than a little untidy during his teenage years. In fact, his boarding school bedroom resembled a disaster zone with clothes scattered everywhere as if a tornado had just struck.

During that time, a dorm supervisor noted in his semester report: "His room is inspected night and morning every day, and I always find the floor cluttered up with articles of every description. When he sees me enter the room he will at once start to put everything in order. He does it willingly and often remarks, 'I never get away with anything in this place.'"

I mention this incident from the young JFK's life not just to give the parents of naturally untidy teens some hope that their offspring might amount to something after all. I do also to point out accountability's importance in our lives.

No matter how much good will we have, sometimes the things we ought to do just do not get done. We might be determined to do something, and yet, much to our embarrassment, our natural inclinations just take over. As Jesus said to his closest friends, "the



spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (Mt. 26:41)

It is a different story, however, when we have to be accountable to an authority figure — a committee, supervisor, board, teacher, coach, parent. Like the young Jack Kennedy, we step to attention and perform what is expected, complaining only half-heartedly, "I never get away with anything in this place."

Perhaps, in the best of all possible worlds, this should not be. We should know what needs to be done and just do it. But this is earth and not heaven

and there are many conscious and unconscious forces keeping us from doing what we ought to do. Knowing this, we welcome systems of accountability in our lives that invite us to perform in a way that is consistent with the gifts God has given us. And so too with our Synod.

It would have been utter foolishness for the Synod Commission to plan such a large consultative process without having built into it some system of accountability at the end. Wisely, committee members envisioned a Synod Implementation Commission.

Within the next several weeks, Bishop Matthew H. Clark will announce this Implementation Commission's membership. It will be the task of this 15-member body, comprising lay people, religious, and priests, to see that the prioritized Synod recommendations are carried out in the diocese.

Following the Oct. 1-3 General Synod, these good people will work closely with the various ministries at the diocesan Pastoral Center in drawing up a 3-5 year implementation plan that will show how the Synod has refocused their energies, programs and budgets. Most importantly, they will communicate these plans to the people of our local church and — from time to time — will communicate as well our success in implementing

these plans.

The Implementation Commission has another important job. Following the fall and spring Synod discussion sessions, each parish was left with a large number of recommendations to consider. With the help of its pastoral council, each parish had to decide which recommendations should be implemented on the local level and which should not. The Synod Implementation Commission will seek from each parish a report on what action they took on each recommendation and why. In some summary way, they will report this to the whole diocese.

This accountability is not meant to say to the Pastoral Center staff or to hundreds of parish ministers that their work is not trusted or that their loyalty must be proved publicly once again. Rather, it is a way of being responsible to the people of our local church who, trusting in the Holy Spirit, have set our priorities for carrying on Christ's mission. Their work's results must be honored. Their voices must be heard. Their priorities must become our priorities; their recommendations our recommendations.

Rather than undercutting anyone, the Synod Implementation Commission will help us all to boast as a local church that, by God's good grace, "We never get away with anything."

God gives His graces at last moment

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

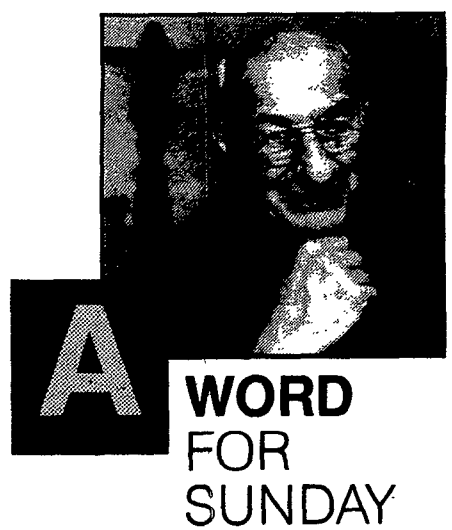
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 24:13-35; (R1) Acts 2:14, 22-28; (R2) 1 Peter 1:17-21.

One of the world's great stories is that of Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Pilgrims did not have to stay in Jerusalem for Passover. Many set out for home on the day after the Pasch. The following tells about two of Jesus' followers — one of them named Cleopas

Depressed and disappointed, the disciples started out around nine o'clock in the morning for their home village of Emmaus. The fact that they were heading home and not for Galilee showed what little stock they had put in the women's story about the empty tomb and the angels.

They were walking back on the third day. Evidently, they had waited to see — but not for the three full days. So often God gives His graces at the last moment, as He did when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Isaac. On Easter, the third day, Jesus actually appeared to the disci-



ples, but at the end of the day. Perseverance crowns the work.

The two followers had not waited long enough. As they were walking and debating about all the things that had happened to Jesus, He drew near and began walking with them. Some believe that they did not recognize Him, because they were walking toward the sunset. Emmaus was seven miles west of Jerusalem.

The setting sun had so dazzled them that they did not know their Lord. They say that Christ's followers walk to the sunrise not toward the sunset. His disciples were walking — not to a falling night — but to a breaking dawn. In their sorrow the two men had forgotten this.

As they walked, Jesus began to explain the Scriptures. Only Jesus has the ability to make sense out of things. These men seemed to have no explanation about what happened during the previous days. Their words, "We were hoping ..." were those of men whose hopes had died. As Jesus talked, however, hope revived and their hearts began to burn within them. Only in Jesus can we have hope.

When they had arrived, Jesus gave the impression that He was going on farther. He would never force Himself upon them or anyone. He meant to move on — and would have — had they not urged Him to stay. Their urging was more than an invitation, it was a plea, for they had been touched by His holiness. Had they not pleaded, He would have gone on and would not have revealed Himself.

God wants us to pray and invite

Him into our hearts. He wants us to accept the graces He gives. If we do, other graces will follow.

The two men's act of charity was their response to Jesus' discourse. And it merited His remaining with them.

They recognized him when He broke bread at the table. He disappeared immediately as if to teach us that from now on His presence with us would be a sacramental one, that a miraculous appearance would never again be needed so long as He was present with us in the Eucharist.

Good news is never meant to be kept to ourselves. When these two men discovered the good news of Jesus' resurrection and the joy with which it filled them, they hastened back to Jerusalem to share their joy. We, too, must remember that the good news and joy are not truly ours until we share them with others.

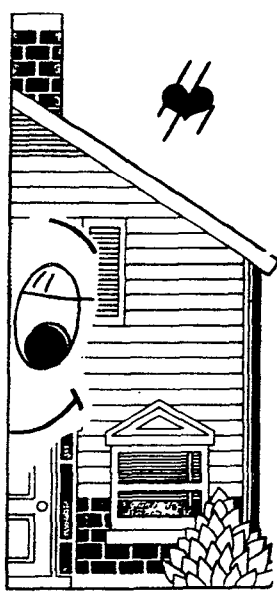
When these two followers got back to the apostles, they discovered that the apostles were enjoying an experience similar to their own. It is the church's glory that we all have the same faith — the same sacraments, the same Peter, the pope — and consequently we all experience the same joy.



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