

# Synod is not a miraculous event

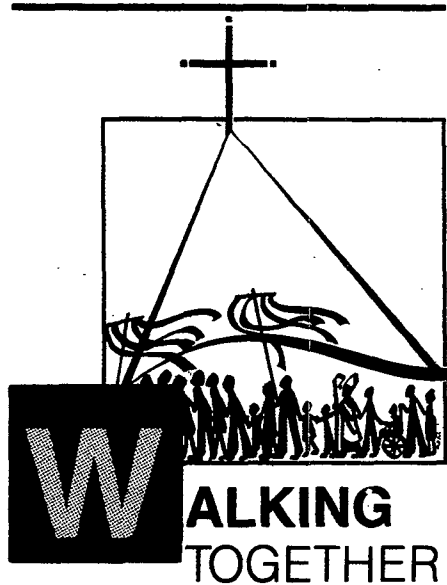
By Judith Ann Kollar  
Guest contributor

No matter what you may have heard about the diocesan Synod, no matter how blessed an event it may seem to you, it is not miraculous. By this I mean it has taken much hard work, concentration and resources to make it happen. It did not just miraculously appear out of nowhere.

Did you ever stop to think about how many hours your parish Synod team spent on your parish Synods to plan, recruit, train, advertise, set up, oversee, compile, record and report? Now multiply this effort by 170 parishes and communities.

And what about all the people who worked behind the scenes: the Synod Commission that planned the whole process; the volunteers who organized the returned questionnaires; the writing committees that hammered out the discussion papers; the University of Rochester student who got the booklets ready for publication; the volunteer translators who made sure the materials were available in Spanish, Polish and Lithuanian; the volunteers who sorted, packaged and delivered materials; and the data processing people who worked under tight constraints.

As the Synod process unfolded, glitches of course were discovered: some parish teams did not submit their top recommendations on time;



some of the recommendations did not follow the "who-what-why" pattern; some parishes were late in choosing Regional Synod delegates. In every case, human error was to blame. No angelic power miraculously intervened to save them from their faults.

Each Regional Synod has also depended upon many people's cooperation: delegates, facilitators, parish Synod teams, regional coordinators, musicians, volunteers who coordinated the whole day by taking attendance and preparing lunches and so on. All of this required hard work. No one reported a miraculous intervention (although in a couple of regions there were rumors of a last-minute

multiplication of the loaves).

As the days get closer to the spring Regional Synod, no one is expecting the lists, name tags, packets and folders to be miraculously produced with no effort on our part. No, Father Joseph A. Hart, Marcy Holtz and an army of volunteers are working overtime to make sure that everything is done properly and on time.

Neither the Synod nor any of the work we do in our parishes is ordinarily accomplished by direct divine intervention. This is not to say that God's gracious providence has abandoned us. Rather God, who has showered our faith community with many gifts and talents, ordinarily works in and through us as we go about our daily routines.

It is because God continues to influence our work that we need to continually pray for guidance. This is why St. Ignatius Loyola recommends that we pray as if it all depended on God but to work as if it all depended on us.

We can be sure of the Holy Spirit's inspiration in our deliberations at the upcoming General Synod, but the Holy Spirit will not cart boxes, make lists, assign seats or prepare facilities at the Riverside Convention Center for the October gathering. It will not be the Holy Spirit orchestrating the liturgy to close the Synod and celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Rochester diocese.

No, it will be you and your neighbors; the Synod Office and its cast of many volunteers; the Convention Center and Rochester Community War Memorial staffs, and those of the downtown hotels; delegates and their families; facilitators; vendors at the Convention Center; and maintenance crews. They will all collaborate to make the General Synod happen.

What can you do? First of all you can pray for strength and wisdom for the people who have to put it all together. You can pray for the deliberation's success and the courage of the delegates so they might be open to the Holy Spirit in their discussions. You can pray also that an early snowstorm doesn't hit Rochester the weekend of Oct. 1-3, 1993.

You can say "yes" when asked to volunteer. You can be supportive in the community when you hear people ask about the Synod and what it might accomplish.

Although the Synod will be the result of careful planning and hard work, a miracle might occur after all. That miracle will be that 1,500 delegates representing God's people in this place will gather in God's name and for God's glory, sharing their wisdom and experience and creating a future that is good for us all.

Let the miracle happen.  
Kollar is director of professional development for the Diocese of Rochester.

# Divine assistance is there if we ask for it

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

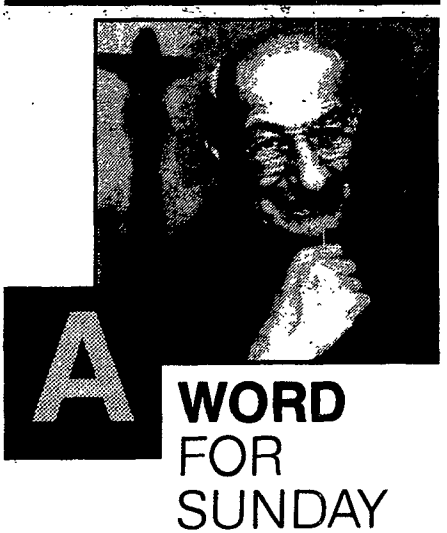
Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 14:15-21; (R1) Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; (R2) 1 Peter 3:15-18.

The readings will focus on another aspect of the paschal mystery — the gift of the Holy Spirit — from next Sunday until Pentecost. Jesus promises the Spirit in the Gospel.

The first reading shows how the promise is fulfilled. The passage used is the classic text for proving the sacrament of confirmation. The second reading explains that confirmation obliges us to be our faith's defenders: "Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours be ever ready to reply."

The Gospel is full of "ifs." The "if" in "if you love me" is a mighty important one. It goes to the heart of the matter, which is the heart. One should never trifle with the heart, the main-spring of physical life. A person will die if the heart stops.

The heart is also the source of our moral life: all great issues spring from the heart. "From the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy ..."



(Mt. 15:19). The clean of heart shall see God.

Love's test is obedience. Jesus showed His love for the father by becoming obedient even to death on a cross. Obedience to that same will of God is the way we too can show our love of Jesus. A girl said to her mother, "I love you." Her mother answered, "Well, I wish you would show it a little more."

Jesus said to us, "If you love me,

keep my commandments." If we do not relish keeping the commandments, then something is wrong in our hearts and we have "heart trouble." We then need for it to be set straight.

Yet keeping the commandments is not enough. We must keep them out of love for God. The Pharisees kept the commandments, but their hearts were far from God.

Am I an eye-server only — doing good to be seen by men and acclaimed by them? Do I make the Morning Offering every morning? Do I renew it often during the day with an "All for Thee, O Jesus"? It is important to have the right intention and to have a clean heart.

This is not easy. It is a Herculean task to purify our hearts, to think the right thoughts, to have the right intentions.

One of Hercules' 10 labors was to clean out the Augean stables in a single day. King Augeas had thousands of cattle whose sheds had not been cleaned in years. Hercules diverted the courses of two rivers, made them flow through the stables to form a great flood and washed them clean in no time at all.

Our hearts are like that — not only are they tempted to corruption by the filth and sins of centuries, but our own personal sins have often made them selfish, self-centered, and egoistic. Often our hearts need a great washing. To make this possible, Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always."

A synonym for advocate is lawyer. An advocate is a lawyer called in to help someone in legal trouble. Nor should we pass over the word "another," which means that the Holy Spirit will be for us all that Jesus was for His apostles.

Whenever the apostles were in trouble, they went to Jesus. Whenever they did not understand what Jesus had taught or done, they asked Him. Whenever they felt unable to do what they knew they should, they turned to Jesus. In other words, we must establish the same relationship with the Holy Spirit as the apostles had with Jesus. In trouble, puzzlement, pain, or doubt, He will always help. Again the big "if" — "If we ask Him."

Jesus has not left us orphans; He has given us the Holy Spirit — if we want Him.

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