

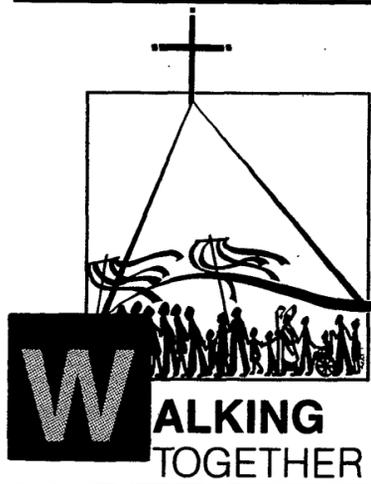
An explosion of expectations

By Judith Ann Kollar
Guest contributor

More than a week has gone by since the May 22 Regional Synods but I am still reveling in the experience. For me it was an explosion of expectations and hope. In every conversation before, during after the discussions, people spoke of their hope for the Church of Rochester. They knew that what they said would have an impact. They knew they would make a difference.

A sense of realism could be felt as topics were addressed and questions were asked: Could our parish do this? Will the diocese have enough money to hire someone? Will this really satisfy the needs? Are these needs so large that what we are doing will barely make a dent? Is it realistic to think that this can be done by just our church? But through the whole day, you could feel the hope, you could sense the care, you knew these were people serious about the task at hand — forging the future of our church and attempting to meet the needs presented.

This is not to say that humor was absent. At some point laughter was heard at every table. And, of course, everyone was delighted to discover that we were ahead of schedule, that lunch would be served earlier and we would be home and in the sun sooner than anyone expected.



Remember the last Regional Synods? Ice, snow, cancellations. This time the sun shone so brightly that we sometimes found it difficult to think of staying inside all day. Since we don't have many sunny days (the Sunday paper said that we average only 134 per year), it was heroic virtue on the part of the 1,500 people who willingly chose to sacrifice one for this worthy cause.

I may be accused of being a Pollyanna but I think the sun was shining inside on Saturday. It was shining in the hopes and in the expectations; it was shining in the revising and the recommending; it was shining in the shared dreams for a future that

will give hope to many others.

One of the benefits of being assigned to diverse groups was that we were made to see the recommendations from so many points of view. In listening intently to our fellow delegates presenting arguments in favor of particular recommendations, each person in my group was urged to rethink his or her priorities. In fact, at the end of one discussion when our facilitator asked each of us to share our top five priorities, one woman called out, "Wait! I want to hear what everyone else has to say. It has already changed my order."

The Yates-Ontario-Wayne region in which I live is a large region with very diverse parishes. Some are very small and others quite large. As a result, I heard people say, "That might work in your parish but we could never do it." Each recommendation was tested for reality in the delegates' experience. The fine tuning we did in light of our collective experience is what will make these recommendations accepted or rejected in the final analysis.

These reality checks did not block out our dreaming: dreaming of how to address the needs of our young people, the infirm elderly, the homeless, the unemployed. Everyone knew in his or her heart that everything was worthy of attention. More than once I heard people say, "I hate to prioritize these recommendations! How can you say children and teenagers are

more important than young adults? Or the homeless are more important than the unemployed? Or the elderly are more important than teens? It's terrible to choose."

As terrible as it was to choose, we each did. We knew that we had to choose because there is a limit to the money we can raise, to the energy we can expend, to the things we can do realistically over a five-year period. That did not put a limit on our hopes or expectations. We still firmly believe that somehow these seemingly impossible problems can be addressed. We believe that somehow by our efforts as church our faith life will have a chance to grow, young people will find a place in the church, the frail elderly and their care givers will be cared for, and the homeless and unemployed will be treated with dignity as we search for a way to end their plight.

As we chose our priorities, we were all filled with hope and expectation. My hope is that we will not be disappointed, that the General Synod will further refine these recommendations and that, following the October meeting, we will have a realistic pastoral plan in place. We need this plan and the money and energy to fulfill it. These great hopes and expectations must not be dashed.

Kollar is director of professional development for the Rochester diocese.

Can you define the mystery of the Trinity?

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

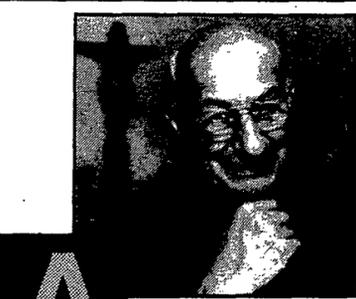
Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 3:16-18; (R1) Exodus 34:4-6,8-9; (R2) 2 Corinthians 13:11-13.

After Vatican II, a priest friend of mine once startled me when he said that St. Thomas Aquinas was now only a name in theology's history.

As a student at St. Bernard's Seminary back in the 1930s, we had a great Thomist professor, Dr. Joseph C. Fenton. He used to thunder, "Nos ne cesses Thoma tueri" ("Never cease to defend Thomas.") Then he would say the two books used at the Council of Trent were the Bible and the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas.

Since Vatican II, a glacial theological shift from the conceptualism of St. Thomas to the concretism of existentialism has occurred. To the Thomist, philosophy was the handmaiden of theology; to the Existentialist, anthropology, sociology and depth psychology are the ways.

What's this got to do with Trinity Sunday? A lot, I think. Much of the confusion in the expression of the faith today has happened precisely because St. Thomas has often been



WORD FOR SUNDAY

relegated to the bookshelves.

One thing Thomism brought to theology was clarity regarding the mysteries of our faith. Were I to ask wherein lies the Trinity's mystery, I wonder what answers would surface?

The Thomist would have no difficulty. Like every philosopher, the Thomist makes distinctions: in the case of the Trinity, between "nature" and "person." Nature is the "what-ness" of a being, the source of its

activity. Person is the "who-ness" of a being, the one acting. Nature is like a car, enabling one to do something, while person is like the driver of a car, the one responsible for what the car does.

Human nature is finite and so only one person possesses it: one to a customer. But the divine nature is infinite, so more than one person can possess it — in fact three do.

Once this distinction between nature and person is clear, the definition of the Trinity becomes equally clear. The Trinity is three Persons possessing one and the same divine nature. In the Godhead there is one What and three Whos.

Thus in making the sign of the cross, we begin with, "In the name of ..." We do not use the plural "names." For name answers the question "what," and in God there is only one "what," one divine nature.

Then we continue with the words, "of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We name three Persons, for a personal name answers the question "who," and in God there are three "whos."

The different names indicate that each Person is distinct from the other:

the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Holy Spirit. The coordinate conjunction "and" designates that each Person, though distinct, is equal to the other Person.

Herein lies the Trinity's mystery: how can a Son who proceeds from the Father be equal to Him, and how can the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son be equal to them? That's the Trinity's mystery: the processions of one Person from the other and all being equal.

One of the reasons Jesus revealed the Trinity to us was to teach that heaven is not a glorified church service, plucking harps and singing "Alleluia," but happiness. In our quest for happiness we all seek life, truth, and love without end. We often seek it in a person, in marriage. But no human person can give all the life, love and truth the human heart craves; therefore no human person can ever make us completely happy.

Jesus likened heaven to a wedding feast to three divine Persons: a Father of endless life; a Son of inexhaustible truth; and a Holy Spirit, love personified. The Trinity says that eye hath not seen nor ear heard the happiness God has in store for those who love Him.



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