

Mary shares Son's kingship in heaven

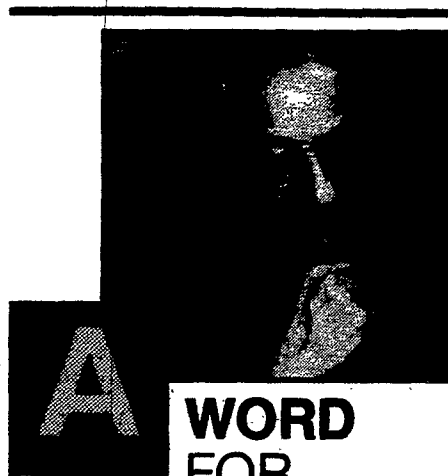
Father Albert Shamon
Courier Columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 1:39-56; (R1) Revelation 11:19 and 12:1-6, 10; (R2) 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.

One day Jelena, one of the two girls who claims to receive messages from Our Lady at Medjugorje, asked the Mother of God, "My Lady, why are you so beautiful?" Jelena says Our Lady answered, "I am beautiful because I love. If you want to become beautiful, love and you will not need the mirror so much."

When Doris Day was asked what kept her looking so young, she answered, "Not expensive face creams, nor 14 hours sleep at night. It's the thoughts I think. If you think ugly thoughts, you will look ugly. If beautiful thoughts, you will look beautiful."

The Middle Ages, the Age of Faith, were filled with joy and merriment. It was the period of the troubadours and minnesingers, of Chaucerian pilgrim-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

ages, knights errant, art that glittered with the gold and the cerulean blues of Cimabue and Giotto. William Thomas Walsh called the 13th the "Greatest of Centuries." This was so, because faith had lifted up the minds and hearts of people to all that was true and good

and beautiful in life, rather than to what is seamy and sordid.

No wonder the church encourages us in these dark days to think of Mary. Thoughts of her will beget hope, will bring back joy to a joyless society. Merry England was merry when it was truly Mary's England.

Think of Mary's Assumption. It is a happy-ending story. It is a story of hope: What happened to her, God means to happen to us.

In the second reading, Paul expounds the doctrine of the Resurrection. As Christ rose from the dead body and soul, so has Mary. That is what her assumption means. For Mary, death was "but the blinking of an eyelid which does not interrupt vision." The Eastern Church speaks of Mary's death as Her Dormition, a sleep. Sleep is only a brief interruption in life.

The scriptural basis for her Assumption can be found in Elizabeth's greeting to Mary: "Who am I that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"

In the Old Testament, during the period of the Monarchy, mothers played a decisive role in the succession of kings. In the age of the harem, the throne went to the son whose mother had proved most resourceful in out-maneuvering all the other wives of the dying king.

Bathsheba, for instance, secured the throne of David for her son, Solomon, despite the rights of his older brother, Adonijah. Solomon owned his kingship to his mother. Thus Solomon made a throne for his mother right next to his own. From being one of many wives, Bathsheba became the power behind the throne: the Queen-Mother. All the king's power was hers. She wore a crown like the king's, sat at his right hand and shared in his royal glory.

Each day we ask our Queen-Mother to "pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." We are asking that she preserve us from the evil that ends in sin and the death that does not end in assumption.

Book calls church to aid oppressed workers

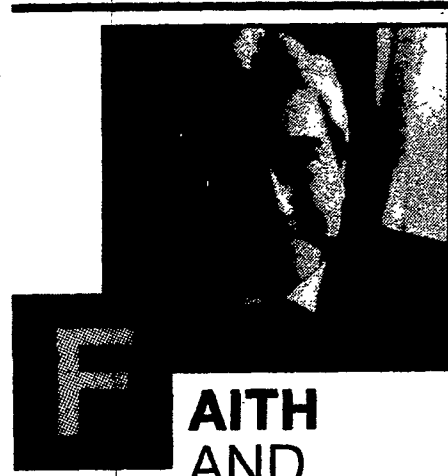
By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Syndicated columnist

"This project has attempted to examine the effects of mill work and mill village life on women and the family, in order to discern how the Church today might better serve the needs of workers in the mill culture."

So begins *Bare Threads: Human Life in the Service of Profit* by Veronica Grover, a study of women textile workers in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas.

This is the first in a projected series of books to be published by the Glenmary Research Center "to uncover the implications for the Church's ministry" through the examination of case studies. There is according to the introduction to the book, "an increasing awareness of the part of many in Catholic ministry in the rural South that the Catholic tradition has not been well-attuned to the local people's lives."

Grover's study illustrates this by using the experiences and grievances of female mill workers. She traces the rise of the Southern textile industry —



F AITH AND WORK

which accounts for one-quarter of all jobs in five Southern states — the development and decline of company-owned mill towns, the efforts at unionization, and current issues of wages, benefits and working conditions. The strength of the book is her extensive interviews with the women textile workers themselves.

She documents the history of injustice and the lack of response of churches of all denominations. "Most of the clergymen were of the denominations which preach a doctrine of hard work and patience, acceptable to a capitalistic employer. The considered economic and social maladies as temporal and therefore outside the sphere of religious concern."

According to Grover, the Catholic Church's response has been influenced uniquely by the demography of its members: "Most of the Roman Catholic parishes in the South are composed of middle and upper class members. Some are in management positions in the textile mills. The management types in these parishes tend to be the most vocal and the most influential. At the same time, the bulk of the southern working class is Protestant. This is the reverse of the Church's earlier experience with industrialization in the North."

Bare Threads ends with a "theological reflection synthesis" written by Lou McNeil, the director of Glenmary Research Center. He attempts to apply Catholic social teaching to the

situation described by Grover and to come up with practical ministerial solutions.

For example, he recommends that "the changed demographics of the Catholic community necessitates a new approach to social justice issues in the Church. A receptive audience that personally understands the experiences of the 'poor' or 'outsider' to important decisions can no longer be assumed. The challenge is to bring people to understand and empathize with situations not their own. This demands not a political, economic or social vision of society, but a theological or religious one which builds upon the values that they are already committed to."

Bare Threads is a challenge to the Catholic Church in all sections of the country — a church that now finds itself with a membership derived as often from the middle and management class as from the lower and working class.

EDITORS' NOTE: The address of the Glenmary Research Center is 750 Piedmont Avenue NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30306.

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