

Every Mass pours love into faithful

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

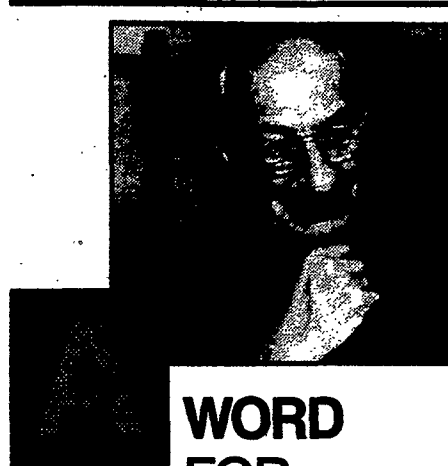
Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 17:11-19; (R1) Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; (R2) 1 John 4:11-16.

Unity is the theme of Sunday's Gospel. Jesus's last prayer to His Father was for unity: "O Father most holy, protect them ... that they may be one, even as we are one."

As for God the bond of unity is love, so the bond of unity for all mankind must also be love. Love is unitive; only hate divides. Pope Paul VI said that the church's mission is to create "a civilization of love."

But from where does love come. Once I thought it came from ourselves, that we could drill deep down into our hearts and love would gush up like an oil well. Boy, was I mistaken. Love comes from outside us. We fall in love. Love has to be put into us as gasoline into a car. Where, then, is love? St. John says, "God is love." How does God pump love into us? Where is the filling station? It is holy Mass.

The Eucharist is a sacrament. Like any sacrament, it gives a sacramental



WORD FOR SUNDAY

grace. And what is the Mass's sacramental grace? It is unity.

During every Mass, the priest calls upon *epiklesis* — the Holy Spirit — twice. Once just before the consecration. He holds his hands over the bread and wine and prays: "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our

Lord, Jesus Christ."

As the Holy Spirit came upon Mary at the Annunciation, and the Word was made flesh, so the church asks that the same miracle take place at every Mass: that the Holy Spirit come upon the bread and wine and change these into the body and blood of Christ. And at the words of consecration that is exactly what happens: the risen Son of God becomes present upon the altar.

The second time the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit is after the consecration. This time, he extends his hands, not over the bread and wine, but over the assembly and prays: "May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit."

Notice we are praying for unity. The bond of unity is love. The source of love is God. And He pours out that love to all who receive the body and blood of Christ in holy Communion, the sacrament of love, and the Holy Spirit, the God of love.

Thus St. Augustine could say: "The Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church."

Before the consecration, the church makes the Eucharist by changing bread and wine into the physical body of the risen Christ.

After the consecration, the Eucharist makes the church by pouring love into all who receive holy Communion and by giving the Holy Spirit to all present. The result of this divine outpouring of love is unity in the community. Such unity by love makes the Church visible and draws others to her, as it once drew pagans, who exclaimed: "See, how these Christians love one another."

At baptism we promise to renounce the devil and all his works. The devil's works are all things that foster disunity, such as hatred, divorce, dissension, discord, babel, confusion.

Through Communion and the Holy Spirit, each Mass is meant to pour just a little bit more of love into each of us, so that we can become loving people at home first and then in society. Every Mass should be transforming us more and more into loving people.

Unity is not the church's only mark; it is the true follower of Christ's unmistakable mark.

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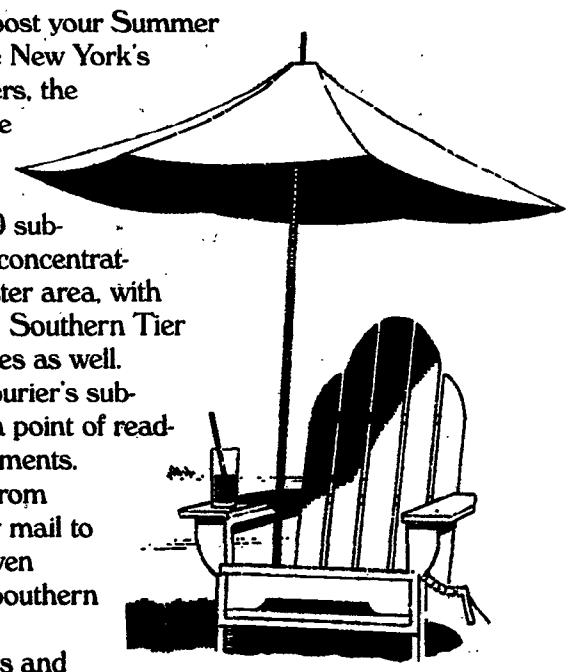
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