

Reconciliation renews the soul

By Father Albert Shamon
Guest columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 15:1-3, 11-32; (R1) Joshua 9:10-12; (R2) 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

The theme of Sunday's readings is reconciliation. Lent is a time to be reconciled to God through a good confession.

In the first reading God speaks of reconciliation: "Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you."

Joshua was Moses' successor. Moses led God's people out of Egypt; Joshua led them into the Promised Land.

Moses led God's people to freedom; Joshua guaranteed it by winning for them a land they could call their own — private property is the safeguard of freedom.

Moses began the march of God's people to freedom with a Passover meal; Joshua ended their march with a Passover meal.

Moses led God's people through the desert for 40 years and fed them with manna; Joshua, by conquering Canaan, ended their wanderings and their need for the manna.

Joshua completed God's reconciliation with His people: "I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you." The Hebrew word for "re-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

moved" is *gilgal*. So they named the place where all this happened "Gilgal." Here they were at home at last. Home, reconciled with God through His mighty deeds.

St. Paul speaks of reconciliation in the New Testament. Five times he uses the words reconciliation and reconciling. Again, Paul makes it clear that reconciliation is from God.

In Greek the word for reconciliation is *allaso*, which means "to change" — to change one's relationship with another so that enemies become

friends and prodigals are reinstated as sons.

Reconciliation, we must remember, implies change in us, not in God. God is changeless. God is love. He loves us always. It is never God who turns from us; it is we who turn from God. Sin ruptures our relationship with God; reconciliation renews it.

Reconciliation is affected by God Himself through the sacrament of reconciliation. In confession, it is God who reconciles us to Himself. Thus in the formula for sacramental absolution, the priest says: "God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son, has reconciled the world to himself ..."

The second important thing in confession is to realize that we must want to be forgiven. "I will break away and return to my father ..."

The third point is that the father in confession is the priest. Some people challenge going to confession to a priest. They say, "Why do I have to tell my sins to a priest?" St. Paul has given the answer: "God has given us the ministry of reconciliation ... making us (his priests) ambassadors of Christ."

Reconciliation is exemplified in the parable of the prodigal son. The hero is not the prodigal, but the father —

the word "father" is used 14 times in the parable. The motive of the son's return is anything but noble. He is miserable and starving, the servants in his father's house are far better off. With such imperfect contrition, he decides to go home and make his confession.

He does. Faith goes an inch, grace comes a mile. The father doesn't keep his son waiting at the door — he rushes out to meet him. He doesn't say, "I told you so." No, he throws his arms around him and kisses him and reinstates him completely.

Likewise, God's pardon of our sins is not so much a response to our confession of them as an expression of His great mercy and love for us. The sacrament of reconciliation is the sacrament of God's undying love and mercy for us.

The one discordant note in the parable is the elder son. He's envious: "You never made a party for me." He's judgmental: "This son of yours has spent his money with loose women." He's cruel: he repudiates his brother, "This son of yours ..." He needed forgiveness as much as the prodigal.

The danger we must all avoid is to seek reconciliation with God and refuse it to other people.

"Virtue is nothing but well-directed love."

—St. Augustine

DiPonzio Funeral Home Inc.

Across from St. Theodore's Church.
Dominic A. DiPonzio - Lic. Mgr.
Christopher B. DiPonzio - L. F. D.
Joseph D. DiPonzio - L. F. D.

219 Spencerport Rd. • Rochester
429-6700

Michael R. Yackiw Funeral Home



1270 Norton Street
544-5000

"IF YOU'VE MADE A WILL THERE'S ONE MORE THING TO DO."

To learn more about prearranged funerals, please call us. Our counsel is always available free of charge and at no obligation.

Crawford
FUNERAL HOME INC.
495 North Winton Road
Rochester, NY 14610
(716) 482-0400

Southview Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation

You Can Feel the Difference!

SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN RELIEVING:

- Neck & Shoulder Pain
- Motor Vehicle Injuries
- Low Back Symptoms
- Work Related Injuries
- Tendonitis & Bursitis
- Knee Problems
- TMJ Pain

CALL 271-3380 for information

Marian Carracino, PT
Director

WESTFALL PROFESSIONAL PARK • 880 WESTFALL ROAD, SUITE D

JONNIE'S TRAVEL SERVICE

- ✈ AIRLINE TICKETS
- 🚢 CRUISES
- 🚆 AMTRAK RESERVATIONS
- 🏠 VACATION PACKAGES
- 🚗 RENTAL CARS AND HOTELS

264-9393

We Charge No Fee for Our Services

319 W. Commercial Street
East Rochester, NY 14445
Piano Works Mall
Fax: 264-9479

ASH WEDNESDAY

March 1st

BEGINS THE LENTEN SEASON!

In conjunction with this special time of year, The Catholic Courier will feature a weekly section devoted to Lenten Dining.

DO YOU OFFER...

- Special Lenten Menu? • Fish Frys?
- Seafood Buffets? • Non-Meat Meals?

OUR READERS WANT TO KNOW!

Call 716-328-4340
For Advertising Information

WIN A FREE ALBUM OR TAPE

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:
Hootie and Blowfish's current album?

ANSWER: _____

Zip: _____

State: _____

City: _____

School: _____

Rules: One correct entry will be selected at random to receive a gift certificate for a free album or tape of the recipient's choice from the House of Guitars

OVER 4 MILLION Albums and Tapes Largest Selection of Compact Discs

645 Titus Avenue
544-9928 or 544-3500

WINNER: Erik Libey who attends the University of Rochester, correctly identified **Sheryl Crow** as the artist who won a Grammy for Record of the Year.

Catholic Courier
Music Trivia
1150 Buffalo Rd.
Rochester, NY 14624