

# Heaven rejoices over repentant sinner

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

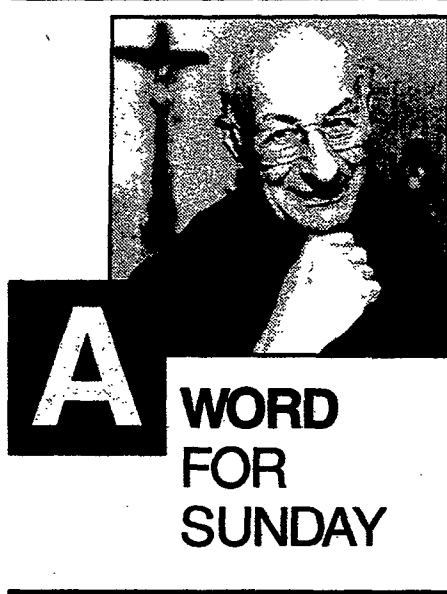
**Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 15:1-32; (R1) Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14; (R2) 1 Timothy 1:12-17.**

Dante called the 15th chapter of Luke's Gospel "a gospel within the gospel." It contains three parables about something lost: a sheep, a coin, a son. Most of us may have at some time lost something of value to us.

A new bride accidentally flushed her \$1,800 diamond wedding ring down the toilet. To no avail, her husband, who was still making payments on the ring, spent the night digging up the yard and tearing up the plumbing for the ring.

Frustrated, he called the town water department the next morning. The city sent out its "lost diamond crew." After they installed a trap at a downstream manhole and flushed the pipe, one of the crew crawled down into the manhole and fished the ring out of the sewage. The rejoicing was great.

Well, the woman in the Gospel who lost a coin had lost something just as valuable as the diamond ring. Her 10 silver pieces constituted her dowry, which she wore on a ribbon around her head as a token of her marital fidelity. If a woman were caught in adultery, one of the coins would be taken out, leaving a gap to show that she had disgraced her marriage vows. So the woman in the Gospel was frantic to find her lost coin. Her reputation was at stake. She subse-



**WORD FOR SUNDAY**

quently found it and there was great joy.

Jesus said that there would be joy like that among God's angels over one repentant sinner. Jesus meant that, because he repeated this theme after each parable. Jesus didn't say that the sinner was loved more, but that there was more joy over his repentance.

Heaven rejoices over a repentant sinner, because sin is a terrible thing. A tendency exists today to accept sin. We know we are sinners, but we tend to see them as excusable sins - misdemeanors, not felonies. Like the Pharisee, we thank God that we are not like the tax collector. Yet, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said anger was in a class with murder and lustful thoughts with adultery. Sin crouches in the heart

## Daily Readings

**Monday, Sept. 18**

1 Tm 2:1-8; Lk 7:1-10

**Tuesday, Sept. 19**

1 Tm 3:1-13; Lk 7:11-17

**Wednesday, Sept. 20**

1 Tm 3:14-16; Lk 7:31-35

**Thursday, Sept. 21**

Eph 4:1-7, 11-13; Mt 9:9-13

**Friday, Sept. 22**

1 Tm 6:2-12; Lk 8:1-3

**Saturday, Sept. 23**

1 Tm 6:13-16; Lk 8:4-15

was bitter, especially since her neighbor, who saw five sons go to war, lost none of them.

One night she had a dream. An angel stood before her and said, "You might have your son back again for 10 minutes. What 10 minutes would you choose? Would you have him back as a little baby, a dirty-faced little boy, a little boy just starting school, a student just completing high school, or as the young soldier who marched off so bravely to war?"

The mother thought for a few minutes and then she told the angel in her dream she would choose none of those times. "Let me have him back," she said, "when as a little boy, in a moment of anger, he doubled up his fists and shook them at me and said, 'I hate you! I hate you!'"

Then she told the angel, "In a little while his anger subsided and he came back to me, his dirty little face stained with tears, and put his arms around me and said: 'Momma, I'm sorry I was so naughty. I promise never to be bad again and I love you with all my heart.' "Let me have him back then," the mother sobbed. "I never loved him more than at that moment when he changed his attitude and came back to me."

That's how God feels about each of us. Sin is serious. God will help us conquer our sins. More important, He forgives them for all who request it. That is why even the angels rejoice whenever one who has been lost is found.

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