

# COLUMNISTS

## Pope has greatly affected moral thinking

By Patricia Schoelles, SSJ  
Courier Columnist

Pope John Paul II is scheduled to visit the United States this week. There is great excitement in the Archdiocese of Newark, New York and Baltimore where he will visit, celebrate Eucharist and give several important talks.

Few people alive today are held in greater reverence than is the pope. He would be revered by many simply because of the office he holds, but Pope John Paul II also possesses many personal characteristics that add to his stature among us.

He has accomplished a great deal during his time in office, and many people across the globe have been influenced by him and by the leadership he has exercised.

In thinking about the moral life, Catholics have been inspired in many ways by the work of this pope.

Many of his encyclicals have addressed aspects of the moral life, and these will remain important documents for the understanding of our moral tradition in the decades to come.

As I reflected a bit this week on all I have come to learn from reading and studying Pope John Paul II's theology on the moral life, I was conscious of



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several major themes that remain for me a major contribution of this man to my own understanding of the Catholic moral life.

Five such themes might provide interesting reflections items as we all focus on the pope's visit to our country:

**PERSONALISM:** The foundation of all our moral teachings resides in the doctrine of human dignity and individual rights.

In all his writing, Pope John Paul II has focused relentlessly on the human

person and on the priority of the claims of persons over those of other institutions.

**OUR SOCIAL NATURE:** Though we are centers of freedom and individual responsibility before God, we are not solitary beings; we are social and interdependent, called to achieve our full potential by living in relationship with others in community.

Pope John Paul II has made enormous contributions in the area of human social relationships, from family life through justice between classes and nations.

**CHURCH IN SERVICE TO HUMANITY:** This Pope has made enormous contributions to our understanding of the church as an institution directed toward making our history as a people more human.

His vision of the church focuses very clearly on the church's call to have a healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, on its role in strengthening society, and on the church as an agent helping to infuse everyday activity with deeper meaning and importance.

**JUSTICE:** Perhaps more than any other pope, John Paul II has promoted the church as a means of defending human dignity, promoting human rights, and building up the entire human family.

In his life as well as in his writings, Pope John Paul II has consistently called for the pursuit of more humane and just living conditions for all, and for the guarantee of human dignity by all societies and institutions.

**LIBERATION:** The goal of the human fulfillment of all people demands that wealthier nations help poor ones and that economic and social structures be reformed to allow for the economic development of all people living on this planet.

Pope John Paul II has encouraged us to appreciate the connection between spiritual well-being and economic well-being, and to work together to empower those who need to pursue their own liberation from unjust and marginalizing social structures.

This is my list of important themes for my life from the papal ministry of Pope John Paul II. I'm sure that if others were to try this exercise on their own, the list would be quite different.

As a church we still need to grow and develop in these five areas. We are not yet fully appreciative of their implications for our life together.

Let us continue to pray for one another and for the pope himself that we can continue to increase in our appreciation for what it will mean to truly embody these five important pillars of the moral life.

## 'Put feet to faith' to make it increase

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 17:5-10; (R1) Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4; (R2) 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14.**

The theme of Sunday's readings is faith. Habakkuk says, "The just man, because of his faith, shall live." The apostles asked the Lord, "Increase our faith."

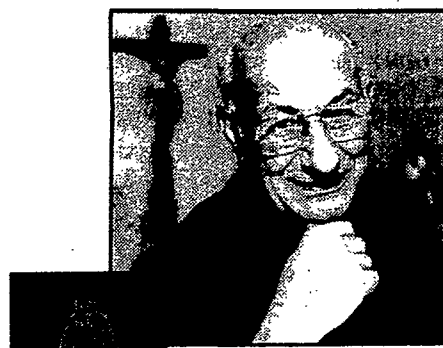
There are two kinds of faith: creedal and personal.

Creedal faith is notional: it means accepting statements. "I believe what you say." Personal faith is experiential: it means accepting a way of life. "I believe in you; therefore I trust you and I will follow you."

Creedal faith addresses the intellect. Creedal faith is static: makes one a believer. Personal faith is dynamic: makes one a doer. It means living the faith and, so, is capable of increase.

In the few verses just before today's Gospel, Jesus had been talking about forgiveness. He had been telling the apostles to forgive those who had injured them — not just once or twice, mind you, but 70 times seven times. Wow! Who can do that? So the apostles asked Jesus to increase their faith.

The apostles' problem was not a lack of faith. Jesus told them that the size of their faith was not the issue. Just a little faith could uproot the deeply rooted sycamore and transplant it into the sea. Jesus was telling them



### WORD FOR SUNDAY

that to do great things, miraculous things, only a little faith was needed.

Their problem, like ours, is that too often we want God to solve all our problems and make the way smooth and easy.

Their problem, and ours, is a lack of action on our faith. The apostles had faith, but they did not use the faith they had. The same is true of us. We have more faith than we think.

If we have ever turned on a light switch, filled our car with gas, mailed a letter, flown in an airplane, or ridden in an elevator, believe me, we have faith.

We have as much faith as Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Mother Angelica, but we just sit around waiting for

God to "increase our faith" — for Him to do it all!

A sales manager of a large real estate firm was interviewing an applicant for a sales job. "Why have you chosen this career?" he asked.

"I dream of making a million dollars in real estate, like my father," the young man replied.

"Your father made a million dollars in real estate?" the manager asked.

"No," replied the young man, "but he always dreamed of it."

The Bible mentions the dreams of the apostles; it doesn't even mention the ideas of the apostles. However, it devotes an entire book to the "ACTS of the Apostles."

We can pray until we are blue in the

### Daily Readings

**Monday, Oct. 9**

Jon 1:1-2:1, 11; Lk 10:25-37

**Tuesday, Oct. 10**

Jon 3:1-10; Lk 10:38-42

**Wednesday, Oct. 11**

Jon 4:1-11; Lk 11:1-4

**Thursday, Oct. 12**

Mal 3:13-20; Lk 11:5-13

**Friday, Oct. 13**

Jl 1:13-15; 2:1-2; Lk 11:15-26

**Saturday, Oct. 14**

Jl 4:12-21; Lk 11:27-28

face for God to give us more faith, but God wants us to get into action using the faith we already have.

Some French prisoners of war during World War II were forced to work in a German munitions factory. When they realized that the bombs they were making were being used to destroy their beloved homeland, they created a malfunction in the detonating device. As a result of the prisoners' efforts, the bombs — which were supposed to detonate on impact — did not explode.

Puzzled by so many failed attacks, the French investigated. Upon opening the bombs, they found inside slips of paper that said: "We are doing the best we can with what we've got, where we are, every chance we get."

"The just man, because of his faith, shall live." He shall live a life of faith. He will do the best he can with what he's got, wherever he is, every chance he gets.

We must put feet to what faith we have; then it will increase. Jesus was telling His disciples to act on the faith they had — to make a difference where they could.

If you want to increase your faith, increase your action. It is not faith we lack, but commitment, dedication, and a willingness to live our faith. Jesus knew this, so he told the apostles to put feet to faith.

Act! Live the faith! The devil trembles whenever someone resolves, "Yes, Lord, I'll do it!"

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"If we behaved like true Christians there would be no pagans."  
-Pope John XXIII