LUMNISTS

Beware of the 'Pharisee' within

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 23:1-12. (R1) Malachi 1:14-2:2, 8-10. (R2)

1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13. All three readings next Sunday exco-

riate vanity and hypocrisy. American humorist Robert Benchley was leaving an elegant salon one evening. He was slightly intoxicated. He found himself face to face with a uniformed man whom he took to be the doorman.

"Would you get me a taxi, my good man?" Benchley said.

The uniformed man drew himself up proudly and replied, "See here, I happen to be a rear admiral in the United States

"Then get me a battleship," Benchley retorted.

To Benchley the plumage of the admiralty was no different than that of a doorman.

Jesus said of the Pharisees of his day that they too put a lot of importance on

"They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels," Jesus said. "They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rab-

Often we are just like the Pharisees. Don't we enjoy sitting at the head table? Don't we enjoy wearing prestige clothes with all the right labels? Wouldn't we like to be called doctor? Aren't we all pea-



a word sunday

HER ALBERT SHAMON

cocks at heart? Don't we love to strut our stuff?

Yet such games motivate many of us to excel. Would some of us work so hard if we were not hung up on money and status? People do crazy things out of pride. But a lack of humility can be a serious thing. Particularly if it weakens our devotion to God. Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, "The proud man counts his newspaper clippings, the humble man his blessings."

But Jesus was concerned about far more than the lack of humility in the Pharisees. Worse than that lack was their sheer hypocrisy.

They preach but they do not practice," he said. "They tell others what to do but do nothing themselves."

But most of all, Jesus was disturbed by their hardness of heart. Jesus called His disciples to seek not after status but after servanthood.

"The greatest among you must be

your servant," Jesus declared.

That was the heart of Jesus' message. The greatest person in the church is not the person who receives the most recognition or is selected to the most prominent job. The greatest person is the one who joyfully serves others in the name of God. The rest is fluff. It is nice to have recognition, prestige, high income, but when all is said and done, these mean little or nothing in regard to the kingdom of God.

As for titles, Jesus said not to put too much stock in them. He discussed honorific titles, such as Master (Rabbi), Father (Abba), and Teacher (Moreh).

It is significant that the only one who ever called Jesus "Rabbi" was Judas. And the only people who ever addressed him as "teacher" were his enemies (Matthew 8:19; 9:11; 12:38; 22:16). Jesus never corrected them, for he was not opposed to titles, but to the hypocrisy and pride of those who sought them.

You've probably heard someone say, Who does he think he is, 'God Almighty"? Well, that was exactly what some of the Pharisees thought of themselves: They thought they took the place of God the Father. Were they not setting themselves above the prophets and God's written words, nullifying the laws of God by their own manmade regulations? (Mark 7:13; John 7:19-23). It was this abuse that Jesus condemned.

Jesus simply meant that no earthly fa-

ther should come before God the Father: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Jesus wasn't forbidding a boy to call a parent "father," only his preferring his father to God. God said, "Honor your fa-ther and your mother." Mary said, "Your father and I sought you sorrowing." St. Paul called himself father of the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:15). What Jesus condemned was arrogance and pride, setting self up against God the Father, trying to take his place.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, Növember 4 Philippians 2:1-4; Luke 14:12-14 Tuesday, November 5 Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 14:15-24 Wednesday, November 6 Philippians 2:12-18; Luke 14:25-33 Thursday, November 7 Philippians 3:3-8; Luke 15:1-10 Friday, November 8 Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 16:1-8 Saturday, November 9 Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12 or 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22

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