

COLUMNISTS

Till the plot of land God has given you

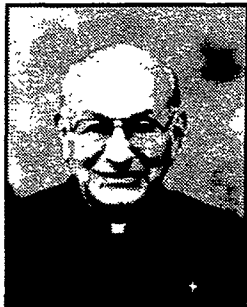
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 9:30-37. (R1) Wisdom 2:17-20. (R2) James 3:16; 4:3.

Sunday's first reading is from the Book of Wisdom — the last book of the Old Testament, written about 100 B.C. Because it was written outside the Holy Land, in Alexandria, Egypt, and written in Greek and not Hebrew, it was not included in the Jewish, nor Protestant, canon of Scripture.

Wisdom was meant to buttress the faith of Jews suffering in Alexandria by answering the question, "Why do the wicked react with such violence against the virtuous?" Bishop Fulton Sheen used to say that society crucified two kinds of people: the very bad, like the thieves on the cross, because they disturb the peace of society; and the very good, like Christ between them, because they disturb the peace of the wicked.

The second reading, from the Epistle of James, says one of the reasons for vile behavior toward the good is jealousy — sadness about the good fortune of another. Envy leads to conflicts and disputes.

Envy is so foolish because each one of us is unique. God took time to make each one of us individually, so that no two people, like fingerprints, are alike. Thus in



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

the symphony of life each person is absolutely necessary. It matters not what instrument we play, provided we play it well. But each one is necessary. So why envy? Just till the plot of land God has given each. So, rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; the envious rejoice with those who weep and weep with those who rejoice.

The Gospel is related to both of these readings. Jesus is the just man beset by the wicked; and the Apostles, his followers, are beset with envy of one another, leading to conflict and disputes — each wanted to be top man in Jesus' kingdom. They were embarrassed when Jesus asked what they were arguing about.

Of course, Jesus knew. "If anyone wish-

es to rank first," he told them, "he must remain the last one of all and the servant of all." Then he took a little child, and said, in effect, "Whoever welcomes a child for my sake ... welcomes me."

How timely is this advice of Jesus! Welcome children; do not abort them. Let them be born! Pray for poor girls frightened into this frightful crime of abortion. But do not judge them, help them; do not criticize them or condemn them; be open to them and heal them. Love her, pray for her, bring her back to God.

Once a child is born, let it be reborn in baptism. Then nurture and nourish that divine life given by baptism. Let the home have holy pictures, grace before and after meals, family rosary, parents going to Sunday Mass and monthly confession, Scripture reading, and an environment of security and love.

A little girl was given a \$5,000 bond on her birthday. Had it been \$10, she would have kept it and spent it. But she felt this was too big for her to keep. So she asked her dad to keep it for her. Time went on and the little girl forgot about the bond.

Years later, when she was about to marry, her dad gave her the bond. She was filled with joy. Now she realized its worth

and was glad to have it.

So shall the moral and spiritual values taught the young be appreciated by them later in life. One day they will realize their worth and will bless their parents for sharing these values with them. Values taught early in life mature in time, just like savings bonds!

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

Daily Readings

Monday, September 22

Ezra 1:1-6; Luke 8:16-18

Tuesday, September 23

Ezra 6:7-8, 12:14-20;

Luke 8:19-21

Wednesday, September 24

Ezra 9:5-9; Luke 9:1-6

Thursday, September 25

Haggai 1:1-8; Luke 9:7-9

Friday, September 26

Haggai 1:15-2:9; Luke 9:18-22

Saturday, September 27

Zechariah 2:5-9, 14-15;

Luke 9:43-45

Liturgical reform had deep roots

Three months ago Milwaukee's Archbishop Rembert Weakland published one of the most important articles of the entire postconciliar period, "Liturgical Renewal: Two Latin Rites?" (*America*, 6/7/97).

It is a compelling rebuttal to a newly circulating charge that the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, approved and implemented by Pope Paul VI, were hastily and carelessly developed and then forcibly imposed on a church that was simply not ready for them, much less in need of them. That view has been expressed now at both the high and low ends of the ecclesiastical ladder.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's opinions are contained in a new autobiography in which he characterizes the liturgical reforms of Paul VI as causing "extremely serious damage" to the church, and com-



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

plains that the suppression of the old Tridentine Mass in use before the council marked a "break in the history of the liturgy, the consequences of which could only be tragic. ..."

The bottom end of the ladder has generated letters to various Catholic publications. The liturgical reforms of Vatican II, we are told, were "steamrolled" over "fee-

ble opposition." As a result the liturgy "in many parishes increasingly resembles a homeowners association meeting."

Such charges are not only far wide of the factual mark, but are also a reckless assault on the memory and reputation of Paul VI.

As Archbishop Weakland points out, the liturgical reforms that Vatican II initiated with Paul VI's full support were not thrown together or "steamrolled" over "feeble opposition." Liturgical renewal, he reminds us, "was the subject that had been the best prepared during the preconciliar period. The liturgical reform did not come out of nowhere. For decades that reform had been making its way, first in monastic circles, and then in the church at large."

"The liturgical renewal," he noted, "was set in place by an ecumenical coun-

cil, not by a group of radical individuals seeking some way to bring ruin on the church. It was prepared for over a long period of time by intelligent and committed people."

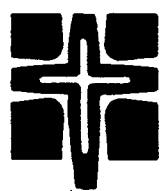
Although there were problems in the early phase of the postconciliar liturgical renewal, Archbishop Weakland concedes, what "totally derailed the liturgical renewal" were not the irresponsible antics of those who allegedly transformed the liturgy into a kind of "homeowners association meeting."

Rather, it was the decision of Pope John Paul II in 1984 to grant the indult that allowed the Tridentine usage to return despite almost unanimous opposition from the bishops of the world.

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Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

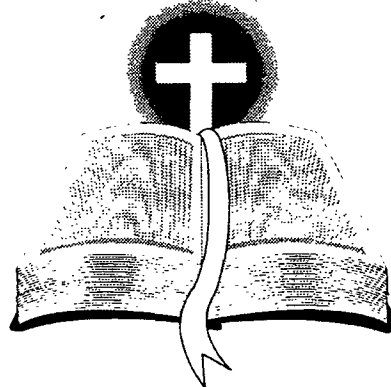
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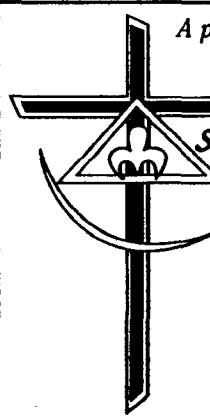
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