

COLUMNISTS

Season invites thoughts of the 'big questions'

As we prepare to enter into the holiday season, beginning with Thanksgiving next Thursday, I find myself wondering what would really be a fitting way to give thanks. Not long ago I was at an interreligious gathering, at which many questions were raised about the state of our world, the state of our churches and even the state of our hearts. That conversation has remained on my mind because it seemed to carry implications about being American, being part of a church founded on Jesus Christ, and trying to be thankful.

Part of our conversation turned to the threat of more violence in Iraq. One participant talked about ways in which the embargo against Iraq works against the possibility of peace. The Iraqi people are unable to secure the necessities of life, and the agreements ending the Persian Gulf War are certain to prolong and intensify the humiliation, poverty and isolation of that nation. I sat among this gathering aware of how these concerns, spoken by religious leaders, sounded so different from how the issue had been spoken of by news commentators, politicians and military leaders.

Until this gathering, all I had heard via TV, radio and the newspapers, were cries about the need "to take out" Saddam. But at this gathering I heard about the need to



the
moral
life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

end the quarantine and segregation that hurt ordinary, real people and contribute to the kind of hostility that makes "weapons of mass destruction" seem necessary and even rational.

The group spoke about threats of layoffs at Kodak, General Motors and other companies. They talked about the local, national and global economy, how it affects workers and their families, how much of it is arranged to keep profits flowing disproportionately toward the pockets of those who own major corporations. They talked about ways in which this system exploits Third-World workers while depriving first-world workers of decent paying jobs.

Until this gathering, I had not heard anyone use the term "responsibility" in reference to those at the "top" of the eco-

nomie ladder — those of us in this country. I had not heard anyone say that we may have to lower our own standard of living to help make life livable in other areas of our globe. The word solidarity was also mentioned. Among the Christians and non-Christians at the gathering, there was already an acceptance of the fact that we will never be "whole people" until we nurture a sense of connectedness to others, especially the suffering and neglected.

The group spoke about Thanksgiving being a difficult holiday for Americans, since we seem not to be really comfortable receiving gifts. We approve of earning the rewards we are given, of being found worthy of good things that come our way, but we seem not really to want simply to receive. Even saying "thanks" is hard for us, because it seems to put us in a position of "being beholden" to someone else. Americans don't like that at all — even to God!

After reflecting on all this, I'm still not certain about the best way to enter into the approaching holidays, or what to do "after the turkey" on Thanksgiving. The original images of this holiday are evident to children, who often portray pilgrims and Indians sharing a meal together.

That gathering of church people made me think a little about letting the holiday play a part in helping me enter into "the

big questions" of our age. I need to consider that some national and international policies, including our embargo of Iraq, actually humiliate, isolate and impoverish nations and peoples. Instead of assuming automatically that such policies are necessary and good, perhaps I need to consider that they may lead not to peace, but to continuing hostility and revenge.

Part of our commemoration of Thanksgiving might lead to questioning ways in which we thoughtlessly endorse all sorts of policies that prevent rather than promote reconciliation. In our economic behavior, too, we might engage in a "Thanksgiving checkup," to help us recognize how we carelessly let our own convenience play right into the patterns that keep riches flowing away from those who truly need them and into the hands of those who already have billions of dollars.

Reconciliation between Iraq and the United States, the need to balance the interests of the rich and poor, acknowledgement that we are all dependent on the unmerited goodness of others, seem worthy of consideration on a holiday that began with two opposing peoples sharing a common meal together.

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Sister Pat Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

Jesus testified to the truth

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 18:33-37. (R1) Daniel 7:13-14. (R2) Revelation 1:5-8.

The feast of Christ the King is put at the end of the church year to make us realize that we shall never fully experience the full reality of Christ's kingship until the end of the world. Only then shall we see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven to receive from his Father "dominion, glory, and kingship."

To understand the first reading, we must see it in its context; we must read Daniel 7:1-14.

One night, Daniel dreamt of four vile and predatory beasts, symbols of ancient world empires. The fact that these empires were likened to beasts indicates that they were savage, bestial, inhumane kingdoms. The winged lion represented Babylon. The bear with tusks for teeth, the Median Empire. The winged leopard, Persia. And the beast with 10 horns, the empire of Alexander the Great, who was succeeded by 10 kings.

After seeing these beasts, Daniel said, "Then I saw one come like a son of man ..." This meant that one day these bestial empires would end, and a new empire would come that would be humane like a son of man. And he would come, not



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

from the sea, symbol of chaos, but from the clouds of the heavens, for his kingdom would be a heavenly one.

To Pilate, Jesus said that his kingdom is one of truth.

It is so difficult to know what is true in today's world. For instance, we hear it said that one out of every two marriages will end in divorce. That's a lie! Government figures and a recent poll by the Louis Harris Company show that only one in eight marriages end in divorce. Sure, there are 1.2 million divorces during an average year. But a much, much bigger 53 million other marriages just keep flowing along. We get so many lies. But Jesus is the truth!

We need truth to live. Yet how often we run away from it, from Christ.

Pilate tried to compromise the truth. He knew the truth: Five times he declared Jesus innocent. Yet he compromised. He wanted to please everybody. First, he tried to pass the buck: He sent Jesus to Herod. When that failed, he fell back on the custom of releasing a criminal on the feast of Passover. But that didn't work: The people chose Barabbas. Then he thought by giving in a little, he might appease the mob's lust for blood. He had Jesus scourged. Finally, he tried to appeal to the pity of the mob saying, "Ecce homo," ("Behold the man.")

Jesus told Pilate that he came to testify to the truth. But Pilate wasn't interested in knowing the truth. Even among Christian communities there are so many versions of the truth. But when all is said and done, there is only one truth, Jesus.

As Eve came from the side of the sleeping Adam, so the new Eve, the church, came from the side of Jesus asleep in death. As Eve became one body with Adam, so the church became the bride of Christ. As the bond between Adam and Eve was never to be broken, so Christ must never be divided from his church. To say I accept Christ, but not the Catholic Church is to divorce Christ and

his church.

"Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice." Today that voice is the Catholic Church, and the vicar of Christ, his spokesman, is Pope John Paul II.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, November 24
Deuteronomy 1:1-6, 8-20;
Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday, November 25
Deuteronomy 2:31-45;
Luke 21:5-11

Wednesday, November 26
Deuteronomy 5:1-6, 13-14,
16-17, 23-28; Luke 21:12-19

Thursday, November 27
Deuteronomy 6:12-28;
Luke 21:20-28

Friday, November 28
Deuteronomy 7:2-14;
Luke 21:29-33

Saturday, November 29
Deuteronomy 7:15-27;
Luke 21:34-36

Women Needed for Hormone Therapy Research

As they search for the combinations of hormone replacement therapy that are both safe and effective, the Reproductive Endocrinology Unit and Menopause Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center seek women to participate in a study.

Volunteers must be healthy, post-menopausal women between the ages of 40 and 65. After a physical examination, women will be randomized to one of 8 treatment groups and receive various combinations of an FDA-approved estrogen and/or progestin, or placebo.

During this one-year study, volunteers are seen every three months. Benefits to volunteers include free Pap smears and lab tests, free mammogram, and possible relief of menopausal symptoms based on the medication(s) they receive. Compensation of \$450 is available. Women who have had a hysterectomy are not eligible.

Women interested in participating can call Kathy DeRider at 275-4149.

The Wind in the Willows

A Rochester Children's Theatre Production



This musical adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's timeless tale follows the adventures of a group of gentle creatures. Told with great humor, fast-paced action and affection, "The Wind in the Willows" is recommended for ages 4 and up, and as a holiday gift for the whole family.

General Admission Tickets: \$8.00
Box Office: 389-2170
Groups: 424-2979

Sundays, December 7 & 14 - 2:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 13 - 11:00 a.m.* & 2:00 p.m.
*Interpreted for the hearing impaired



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