

# COLUMNISTS

## Church calls us to prepare

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 21:25-28, 34-36. (R1) Jeremiah 33:14-16. (R2) 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2.

Advent means "coming." We celebrate three comings of the Lord. His past in history at Bethlehem (celebrated the Second and Third Sunday of Advent). His present in mystery in every Mass (celebrated Dec. 8 and the Fourth Sunday of Advent). And his future in majesty at the end of the world (celebrated the First Sunday of Advent).

Christ came in the past. Christianity is a historical religion, founded on historical events, like the Incarnation and the Redemption; it is not a philosophical concoction spawned in the brain of some dreamer or thinker.

Christ comes in the present at every Mass. Every Mass is the celebration of Christ's presence in the midst of his people. And he comes, not so much to be adored, but for the same reason he came 2,000 years ago: to help us, guide us, heal us, nourish us, strengthen us, and especially to fill us with a love for God and neighbor.

A love that builds up unity in the church and in the social community is the sacramental grace of every Mass. Each Mass pours love into our hearts by giving us the sacrament of love, Holy Communion, and the God of love, the



a word  
for  
sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

Holy Spirit. Thus at every Mass, we pray: "May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together into unity by the Holy Spirit" (Eucharistic Prayer II).

Christ will come in the future at the end of the world.

We are a pilgrim people, a people on a journey. The best way to prepare for a journey is to think about where we are going. Destination is the last thing arrived at, but it ought to be the first thing thought about. Where I am going will determine my preparations. I won't take snow skis if I am going to Hawaii, nor a bathing suit if I am going to Alaska. The end determines the means.

So on the First Sunday of Advent, the church asks us to look to the end. We have not here a lasting city. There will be a quitting time. Our time is limited.

Everything we have is temporary. After time comes eternity; an eternal heaven or an eternal hell. We are going to one of these two places. To which depends on our preparation here and now. Jesus warns us to be on our guard. As the Boy Scouts say, "Be Prepared." We simply do not know the day or the hour.

Jesus said be on guard against three things: overindulgence, drunkenness, and worldly cares. A pampered body can lead to a slack soul. So Jesus said that we must deny ourselves. Our Lady asked us to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. During Advent don't pamper yourself. Be tough. Go to daily Mass. Pray the daily rosary. Daily read the Scripture, especially Luke's Gospel.

Drunkenness was a problem even in our Lord's day. The media fosters this. Note how in movies and on television, every time people gather together in a room the first thing they do is to pour out a drink. Alcohol and drugs are responsible for 90 percent of juvenile crimes, for 75 percent of felonies, for 50 percent of divorces and for 40 percent of fatal accidents. What miseries excessive drink has caused for families!

Finally, Jesus warned about worldly cares. Excessive care for the things of this world can crowd out care for one's salvation. Our Lord told Martha she was

busy about many things, but only one thing was necessary. There is a divine providence — a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will. God is our Father: He feeds the birds of the air, clothes the flowers, how much more we his children. Worldly cares spring from an evil root: lack of trust in God. For strength to do this, Jesus advised, "Pray constantly" — especially the rosary.

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

### Daily Readings

**Monday, December 1**

Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 8:5-11

**Tuesday, December 2**

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24

**Wednesday, December 3**

Isaiah 25:6-10; Matthew 15:29-37

**Thursday, December 4**

Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

**Friday, December 5**

Isaiah 29:7-14; Matthew 9:27-31

**Saturday, December 6**

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26;

Matthew 9:35-10:1, 6-8

## Going beyond small talk reaps pleasant rewards

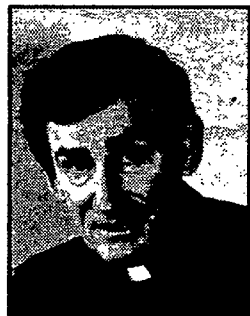
The cry "There's no respect anymore!" has never been louder than today. It makes you wonder what our world would be like if we showed a little more respect than we do.

Allow me to share with you an experience I had while walking around Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. It illustrates just one of respect's many rewards.

One morning I noticed a well-dressed man stop to talk with a street person pushing a cart filled with all his belongings. Instead of brusquely greeting him and moving on quickly, as most people tend to do to avoid being asked for money, the well-dressed man lingered.

After some simple remarks about the weather, he delicately and respectfully asked the street person about his life. The dignity with which he did this lent profound meaning to their conversation and took it far beyond small talk or inquisitiveness.

As I listened at a distance, the street person painfully told his story. Ironical-



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BY FATHER EUGENE HEMRICK

ly, when he finished, he thanked the well-dressed man for listening and never once asked for anything.

Reflecting on this, I couldn't help but think that the time and respect given that homeless person had to be more rewarding than any amount of money he would have received. Oh, sure, he would have welcomed a handout, but there was an awesomeness about that encounter that took it beyond begging and handouts.

One human being was allowing an-

other to stand tall. This is rare among friends, let alone in the encounters of the well-off with the poor.

No doubt the well-dressed man also was rewarded well, for the exercise of goodness always brings us closer to our true self — to that person we really are meant to be.

I vowed after experiencing that inspiring incident to jump at the next opportunity I had to duplicate what I saw. I did not have to wait long.

The next morning a group of laborers began repairing our parish's parking lot. After Mass, I spotted the foreman and said hello in Spanish. I had done this several times before, but never had stopped to converse. This time I did, learning that he came from Central America. What followed in our conversation was awesome.

His father, mayor of his hometown, had been killed for defending the poor. This man fled the country and came to the United States where he learned Eng-

lish and worked nights and days to build up a business. He now owned a large business of his own.

He told me that his sister had remained in Central America and was teaching poor children in the jungles.

"I am planning to see her soon," he said, "I want to build her a small two-room school. It is my way of thanking God for everything he has done for me."

As I left him, I too thanked God for having been touched by a person I frequently had seen, but to whom I had given only passing respect. In our encounter I learned that he possessed inspiring convictions — an important reminder from him of what my own true convictions must be.

So I came to see that respect allows another person to touch our lives in ways that ennoble us.

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Father Hemrick is director of diocesan relations at The Catholic University of America.

## 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    Sundays, December 7 & 14 - 2:00 p.m.  
Box Office: 389-2170    Saturday, December 13 - 11:00 a.m.\* & 2:00 p.m.  
Groups: 424-2979    \*Interpreted for the hearing impaired



Nazareth College  
Arts Center

4245 East Avenue • Rochester, NY 14618-3790

## 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.