

# Fr. Shamon, 88; columnist

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Father Albert J. M. Shamon, long-time columnist for the *Catholic Courier* and administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel in Fleming, died on Nov. 21, 2003. He was 88.

Father Shamon's passing ended 63 years of priestly service. Bishop Matthew H. Clark noted that Father Shamon's writings in his *Courier* column, "A Word for Sunday," supplemented his many other ministries.

"For decades, readers of the *Courier* looked forward to Father Shamon's column," Bishop Clark said in a statement. "His writing was lively and filled with wisdom and a real compassion for people. His illuminating thoughts and clear explanations of the Word of God and how it works in our lives today will be sorely missed. The column was a wonderful ministry that supplemented his many other ministries through these many years as priest, pastor and teacher."

Karen Franz, the *Courier's* general manager/editor, also praised Father Shamon for his willingness to write regularly as part of his ministry.

"In addition to the many members of our own diocese who were regularly touched by his wit and wisdom, a number of clergy from other dioceses have subscribed to the *Courier* over the years to use Father Shamon's columns as aids in homily development," Franz said. She added that she was also impressed by Father Shamon's "humble, self-effacing manner."

"He clearly was quite knowledge-

able about many subjects, but never talked down to anyone," she said. "Instead, he found a way to connect to people at various levels of education, which I believe was a key to his column's popularity. He also leavened the lessons he imparted with gentle humor and common sense. He never sought accolades — or pay, for that matter — and was the most reliable of contributors a newspaper editor could hope for. We will miss him greatly."

Father Shamon retired from writing his weekly *Courier* column Oct. 2. Bone cancer had paralyzed his right arm, forcing him to give up writing. His last column about marriage was much like those that preceded it, filled with down-home wisdom.

"Right relationships with God are primarily expressed through right relationships with people," Father Shamon wrote. "Better one solid love relationship than an impersonal-attempt to love thousands."

Father Shamon began writing the column in 1967, taking Scripture readings for the following Sunday and explaining their meanings in layman's terms. He often used contemporary situations as examples with which readers could identify.

In 1967, Father Shamon also authored "The Church: Sign of the Times," a 10-part series that appeared in the *Courier* and explained the documents of the Second Vatican Council. In 1955, Father Shamon published the book, *Treasure Untold, Reflections on the Apostles Creed*. Several chapters of this book originally appeared in the *Courier-Jour-*

*nal*, the name by which the *Courier* was known prior to 1989. Father Shamon also wrote four other books, many booklets and articles on catechetics.

A native of Auburn, Father Shamon grew up attending St. Aloysius Church, and studied for the priesthood at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester. He was ordained a priest May 18, 1940, and first served as assistant pastor at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Irondequoit. In 1944, he became assistant pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Rochester. In the 1940s, he also taught at Aquinas Institute in Rochester, and during the 1950s, he taught at St. Andrew's Seminary in Rochester.

One young man he inspired to become a priest during the 1950s was Father Michael F. Conboy, diocesan director of priest personnel. Father Conboy said his father and Father Shamon's brother George were friends. The two men apparently arranged to have Father Shamon pay a personal visit to the teenage Father Conboy's Auburn home in 1953 to talk to him about the priesthood.

"It was not necessarily what he said, it was his person," Father Conboy said of Father Shamon's influence. "He just sort of had a magnetic character about him and personality." In a homily at Father Shamon's Nov. 25 funeral Mass at St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn, Father Conboy called Father Shamon, "a faithful friend and gracious mentor."

"Father Al has served long and well, and we are better for his time among us and diminished by his



passing," Father Conboy said in his homily.

In 1961, Father Shamon was named pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in Victor. He was named diocesan vicar of education in 1967. He resigned his pastorate in 1970 to work as education vicar full time. In June 1973, Father Shamon became administrator of St. Mary's Parish in Waterloo, then became pastor in July. He held that position until his retirement in 1985.

Nina Duprey was one of the parish's religious-education teachers during his tenure at St. Mary's. She also worked on Marian conferences at which Father Shamon spoke. The priest was vocally enthusiastic about his love for Mary, she said.

"One of the comments Father said was that he didn't want to go to purgatory," Duprey said. "He wanted to go straight to heaven and said, 'When I get there, I'm going to jump straight into Our Lady's arms.'"

Longtime friend Kathleen Neilon, a parishioner at St. Jude's Parish in Gates, added that it was appropriate that Father Shamon died on a Marian feast day, the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She added that she thought he was "cool" and "holy."

"Father was a star," she said.

After his retirement, Father Shamon administered St. Isaac Jogues and continued to write and teach. Among his many activities was playing an instrumental role in the 1993 founding of Auburn's Tyburn Academy, an independent, private school in the Catholic tradition. Principal Jeanne Hogan said Father Shamon celebrated Mass there three times a week, taught theology and counseled students. The priest possessed a mischievous sense of humor that ingratiated him with the students, she said.

"He had a great rapport with the students, and they loved him dearly," Hogan said.

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