

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

FOLLOW CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

(Text: See Matthew 26:36-46)

CHRIST'S GREATEST VICTORY during Holy Week was the victory at Gethsemane. His triumphs on the Cross and at the Tomb were minor compared with the victory in the Garden. The big battle was not fought on the Cross, despite its dramatic setting. It was waged and won in a lonely place of prayer near the Mount of Olives.

The word "Gethsemane" means "oil press." It is likely that the fruit of the olive grove on the mount was turned into oil at Gethsemane. Perhaps it was a secret hideaway, where Christ sought spiritual strength amid quiet surroundings—hence the necessity for bribing Judas to reveal its location.

Gethsemane was a place of conflict. In the Garden, we see human weakness—the disciples slept, even though Christ had commanded them to pray. We see treachery, for it was there that Judas betrayed his Master with the kiss of death. But most important, in Gethsemane, we see victory over self as Jesus, the son of man, struggled with the difficult choice between life and death he was finally to decide as Christ, the Son of God.

The time was Thursday evening. They had just finished the Lord's Supper, and "after they

had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives." As they came to the entrance to the Garden, Jesus left eight of the disciples at the gate, and asked three to accompany Him to His favorite place of prayer. Of these three He asked a favor—that they would watch and pray with Him, for He was under a great burden. He might as well have left all eleven at the gate.

CHRIST WAS UNDER an emotional strain. For one thing,

there was the excitement of the week. Only a hundred hours before, the throng had milled about Him, as they welcomed Him to Jerusalem in the triumphal procession we celebrate on Palm Sunday. Certainly, it had been an exciting day when men had called Him the Son of David and had cried Hosannas to Him. Only seventy-two hours before, Christ had incurred the wrath of the Temple authorities by driving the money changers out of the Temple, and that same night He had to flee to Bethany for safety.

Tension was running high in the city. Tremendous forces and events were playing upon Jerusalem, for there was being enacted a Divine Drama that involved God, His Son, Man, Sin, Life and Death. This was no ordinary day—and Christ was facing a conflict within Himself.

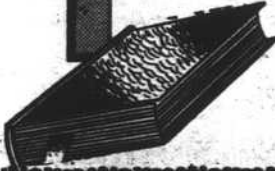
A clue to the importance of the hour is found in the many times He had previously repeated those cryptic words, "My hour has not yet come." Christ knew that He had been born for some tremendous purpose, greater than that of just preaching. He now realized that His hour was at hand. With the undercurrent of unrest and dissension coming to a head, Christ was faced with a decision. Should He flee Jerusalem and live to preach another day? Or should He stay and defend with His life the truth He was preaching? There was also the natural reluctance to voluntarily suffer. So Christ was there praying for victory over Himself.

In Gethsemane, Christ was putting into practice what he preached when He said, "Deny thyself." Socrates embodied a great truth when he said, "Know thyself." But Christ went deeper when He said, "Deny thyself." One is self-realization; the other is self-sacrifice. At Gethsemane, Christ denied Himself in his desire to save others.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED that Christ did not do what many of us would have done had we been in the same situation. He did not call his disciples together to map strategy and see how



REV. D. M. CLARK



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DEADLINE for church news and photos is Friday noon preceding the next Thursday publication date at the Rev. Clark's home, 1676 North 'E' St., phone 642-1560. All items submitted must be accompanied by the sender's name, address and (if available) phone number.

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they could wiggle out of the situation. Nor did He try to get in touch with the local authorities and attempt to negotiate some kind of a truce. (That, of course, would have appealed to the Pharisees.) Nor did Christ try to consult a lawyer. When Christ faced the supreme conflict in His own life, HE CONSULTED GOD. We would do well to do likewise.

Christ triumphed in His conflict with Himself by putting the conflict on a Divine basis. He was not trying to work out a human solution to His problems. He did not ask Peter, James and John for advice. He asked them to pray. It was the Divine Imperative that Jesus sought, regardless of its physical consequences. He was not interested in His own desires. He was interested in God's directive.

We are living in an age that places a premium on venal pleasure and luxury. The man who can "get by" without working is considered a success, not a failure. There have been times and societies in which a man had to contribute something to the good of mankind before he was considered a success. Nowadays the fast buck and the easy dollar are often considered the goals in life, not evils to shun. We crave heated homes, the conveniences of inside plumbing, the plushness of thick carpets and soft sofas;

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Sunday School: Sunday, 9:45 am
Morning Service: Sunday, 12 noon
YPWW: Sunday, 6:30 pm

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Mgr. William J. Devlin, 382-9953
704 W. McWilliams Ave., Las Vegas

Sunday Masses: 11 am and 5 pm
Weekday Masses: 7:30 am; Saturday, 9 am
Holyday Masses: 9:30 am and 7:30 pm
Confessions: Saturday, 4-4:30 and 7:30-8 pm
Adult Classes: Monday and Friday, 7:30 pm
Child Classes: Monday, 4-5 pm; Saturday, 9-10:30 am
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and in so doing, we often become soft within. Christ was not interested that night in ease, luxury, and comforts. Remember, He was just as tired as His disciples, but He did not sleep. While Christ prayed, His disciples slept. They had not learned the lesson of self-discipline, of winning the battle within.

Oh, for a return to the pioneer spirit! We need people who will risk material security in order to achieve spiritual security. Our society has turned things around—we sacrifice spiritual security in favor of material ease.

AN EARLY CHRISTIAN once wrote: "No man is free who cannot control himself." The art of self-discipline needs to be revived. Self-control will remove fear, bolster our confidence, and bestow character. The most important battle any of us have to fight is the battle to

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