

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Catholic Lifestyles Changing

Protestant denominations are popularly divided into two groups: the main line churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.) and the fundamentalists (most Baptists, many evangelicals, etc.)

The division is usually related to the way in which the churches and their ministers interpret the bible.

The fundamentalists cling to a literal interpretation of each passage of scripture; they are not very concerned about resolving passages which seem to be in conflict; they abhor efforts to interpret scripture from the viewpoint of literary forms (poetry, historical narrative, stories to express faith convictions about God, etc.)

And, in style, the fundamentalists are very clear and certain in telling us how God responds to our actions — what we have to do to be saved, what kind of behavior will plunge us into hell.

The main line churches tend to be more cautious in their interpretations of the bible. They are less certain about how God is going to separate the sheep from the goats. They tend to place more emphasis on social evils, less on rigorous demands for personal virtue and unwavering faith in the Gospel as preached by this church.

Statistically, the fundamentalist churches seem to be flourishing; the main line Protestant churches seem to be losing members or, at best, holding their own.

For Catholics, this pattern is significant because our church has moved from a style which had many of the characteristics of fundamentalism to one in which its more vocal members seem to express the attitudes and characteristics of main line Protestantism.

Recognizing this change in ecclesiastical style can help us understand why some Catholics are drifting away from their tradition, looking for more certainty, less confusion, more rigorous demands on their response of faith. Even among those who

remain in the Catholic community, there are many who are disenchanted, who yearn for the days when the parish priest seemed to express the clear, authoritative voice of the Catholic church on all religious matters — from birth control to how much of the Sunday Mass you might miss without falling into mortal sin.

And there was great reassurance in the fact that you could count on getting the same answers to all those questions from every priest and every teacher in a parochial school.

Our problem, however, is that we don't believe we can design our church on the basis of consumer appeal. Fidelity to God, as we know God, is the basis of our response — as individuals and as a community of faith.

Those who followed Moses into the uncertainty of the wilderness blamed him for the hardships and insecurity they experienced. He answered that they were bound by their covenant to be faithful to God, wherever He took them. God's promise was not security and comfort; it was that He would be with them.

And that's about the only answer we can offer today. There is still a lot of confusion in our church. There are a lot of things I would like to change.

But I believe that somehow, in its total life, the Lord is present in our Church, is leading us through the desert. If we don't find Him and His call in this band of believers, we would do better to look elsewhere.

But if we do find Him in our Church, then we have no choice but to remain faithful, no matter how uncomfortable we might be. No matter how much we yearn for that security we knew in years past.

Nicaraguan Church Split Over Role of Sandanists

By Agostino Bono
Washington (NC) — "The polarization within the Catholic Church in Nicaragua is a great tragedy" and the chances of its immediate healing are slim, according to Father Henri Nouwen, pastoral theology professor at Harvard Divinity School.

The polarization is basically over the attitudes toward the Sandinista government, said Father Nouwen in a July 28 interview in Washington after spending a month in Nicaragua.

"A large part of the people feel the revolution is good and support it," he said. "Others, including some bishops, think it is a Marxist-Leninist revolution and Christianity is being used by the revolution and manipulated by it."

"There is no chance of schism, but there is conflict and distrust," he added.

Father Nouwen said he hoped for dialogue to heal the divisions.

Supporting the Sandinista government are many basic Christian communities — small groups of Catholics organized around Bible readings and social action activities — while much of the opposition comes from the hierarchy, said Dutch-born Father Nouwen.

"When the institutional church starts distrusting the revolution, more and more people move away," Father Nouwen said. "But the people want to be one church and not separated from the bishops."

Support for the government comes because many people see the Sandinistas as Christian-inspired, said Fa-

ther Nouwen.

"This is a Christian-inspired revolution for the people. The revolutionary leadership is committed to the poor, striving for goals which are within Christian perspectives," he added.

"The revolution gives hope. People make their own decisions, determine their own lives," he said.

Christians and Marxist-Leninists coexist within the Sandinista government, Father Nouwen said.

"The revolution is deeply influenced by Christians. They have influenced the way people acted in the revolution and afterward. In comparison to other revolutions this has been relatively compassionate," he said.

"Many use Marxism as an economic and social theory to understand their situation. They feel Marx offers an intelligent analysis," the

priest said.

"But U.S. accusations that they are part of the Soviet-Cuban conspiracy are hard to prove," he added.

"I do not want to romanticize the revolution. The Sandinistas have made mistakes," he said. Father Nouwen cited their forced removal of the Miskito Indians from their traditional lands along the Honduran border and said the government was "too aggressive with its censorship."

The polarization in the Nicaraguan church has been a concern for Catholic officials outside the country. Pope John Paul II during his March visit to Nicaragua warned Catholic groups to remain united with the bishops and obey them. His call for unity resulted in a shouting match with Sandinista supporters.

"The pope wants unity and that's what I want, but there has not been much unity since his visit," said Father Nouwen.

The priest did not think that current conditions were helping produce a church dialogue because people feel threatened by invasion and have become tense.

"It's hard to have domestic dialogue under these circumstances," he said.

For the domestic situation to change, "much depends on the United States," he added, alluding to U.S. policies of supporting anti-Sandinista guerrillas and of increasing U.S. military presence in the region.

"The United States should not intervene. From a Gospel point of view Christians should do all to protest, no matter what they think of the Nicaraguan government," said Father Nouwen.

Kindergarten at Last For St. Lawrence Tots

St. Lawrence School will open its doors this Fall not only to grades 1-8 but also will be welcoming kindergarteners to its school community.

The 22-year-old school was the only school in the diocesan system last year without a kindergarten.

An enthusiastic school board and parish council planned and worked for a parish addition that would provide a kindergarten room and a multi-purpose room. In February 1983, a parish vote approved of the addition by a 70 percent margin.

The following Sunday, 35 kindergarten students were registered as members of the first class. Students in every grade got busy in a Buy-a-Brick campaign to raise funds for the addition. The goal for the students was \$5,000 but their hard work raised \$5,800.

Construction began during Easter vacation and on the day the new sidewalk was put in, 30 of the new kindergarteners were present to put their handprints into it. Each child's name was written above his or her print in a row that is titled, "St. Lawrence First Kindergarten, 1983."

On Sunday, June 12, many parishioners of St. Lawrence

as well as the new kindergarten class turned out to hold a kindergarten shower and welcome their teacher, Sister Jeanne Morreall.

Gifts for the new classroom received at the shower and opened by the children included everything from sand pails and dolls to storage cabinets and a rocking chair.

All summer long eager kindergarten children have stopped by school with their parents to check on the progress of the construction, to fit their fingers back into their handprints on the walk, and to play in the parish's new playground.

Don't Impose

Collegetown, Minn. (NC) — Evangelizers must "propose, not impose the truth of the Gospel," Archbishop Pio Laghi, apostolic delegate in the United States, told Catholic Indians and missionaries at the 1983 Tekakwitha Conference. The Aug. 10-14 conference brought together more than 1,500 Native Americans from 100 tribes, along with Catholic bishops, priests, Religious and lay ministers who work with them. Archbishop Laghi celebrated an opening Mass with eight bishops, six Indian priests and a score of missionaries.

Managing Time Better

To help individuals manage their time more effectively, the American Red Cross is offering two sessions of a Time Management course in September. The four-hour course is scheduled at 8:45 a.m., Friday, Sept. 16, and at 6:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 19, at the Red Cross, 50 Prince St. A fee of \$5 is charged.

Registration closes Friday, Sept. 9 and may be made at 275-9800, ext. 222.

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