

Father Richard P. McBrien

Essays in Theology



The problem of papal visits

Pope John Paul II has been literally all over the world since his election to the papacy in October, 1978. He makes his second visit to the United States in September.

For many Catholics, the papal trips to nations and continents near and far are a pastoral triumph. The pope is not only confirming the faith of his worldwide flock, but is, at the same time, preaching the Gospel to millions who still have not heard or accepted it.

To be sure, these trips require months of planning, both in the Vatican and in the countries he visits, and they cost millions of dollars to finance. But the pro-papal-trip school of thought is convinced that the pastoral benefits justify the mighty expenditures of time, energy and money.

For many other Catholics, these papal trips are a source of concern. They have no objection to a pope making a few symbolic visits here and there throughout the world, but such visits would have to be carefully determined and justified.

What troubles them most about these trips is not the money they cost (although that does indeed bother them); it is the deflection of effort and energy from other pastoral tasks.

Thus, every day or week or month spent in a diocese or a country preparing for a papal visit is a day or week or month not spent doing the work that the Church in those places exists to do.

But not even that is the worst part of the problem. Rather, it is the diversion of the pope's own time and energy that concerns them. Although this may seem like a novel idea to many Catholics, the pope's immediate pastoral responsibility is to the Diocese of Rome. Indeed, he most effectively teaches and leads the universal Church by effectively teaching and leading his own community of faith in Rome.

These papal trips, however, tend to reinforce a different pastoral image, that of a universal bishop. Thus, when the pope arrives in a particular country, the local hierarchy steps aside, as it were, and receives him as if he were the head of their own conference of bishops.

But he comes as the Bishop of Rome. His primacy within the college of bishops is rooted in his own episcopal ministry to the Diocese of Rome.

It is the Diocese of Rome that antecedently enjoys a primacy within the universal Church ("foremost in love," St. Ignatius of Antioch said of it almost 20 centuries ago). Accordingly, the pope does not become the bishop of Phoenix the moment he steps off the plane and kisses the Arizona earth.

But that is how many Catholics understand the pope's place in the Church, and these papal trips have a way of confirming them in their mistaken view — "mistaken" because they are in opposition to the Church's own official teaching, rendered at Vatican II.

Bishops are not to be regarded "as vicars of the Roman Pontiff, for they exercise an authority which is proper to them . . . Their power is not destroyed by the supreme and universal power" (Constitution on the Church, n. 27). If, nevertheless, many Catholics would still want to argue in favor of so many papal trips around the world, they should begin to offer specific evidence in support of their position.

It is not enough to say that the trips have a beneficial pastoral effect. How do we measure that pastoral effect? What evidence do we have, for example, that the pope's visit to the United States in 1979 made any significant pastoral difference, for Catholics or for non-Catholics?

One is not saying here that no evidence could possibly exist. It's just that such evidence has never been brought forward. In the absence of such evidence, one then is prompted to raise questions about the expenditure of time, energy, and, yes, money as well.

No American Catholic could have been pleased by the front-page story in The New York Times of February 18: "Auction Plan For TV Rights On Papal Visit Stirs Uproar."

The Diocese of Monterey, California, simply cannot afford the \$2 million required to host Pope John Paul II for a five-hour stopover in Monterey and nearby Carmel. So it decided to try selling the television rights to the outdoor papal Mass.

"It breaks the bounds of taste, putting the pope in the same category as Madonna or Michael Jackson," said the news director of a San Francisco station.

No one wants that. Least of all, the pope himself.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



The Church outside Rochester

Q: Weren't you in Elmira recently?

A: Yes. Father Paul McCabe invited me to take care of Our Lady of Lourdes the weekend of Feb. 28. Father Bart O'Brien has just finished the annual Lourdes novena, but was committed elsewhere for that weekend. I had only 46 hours, but they were profitable. I left Lyons Friday afternoon after serving there for three weeks, and stopped at Watkins Glen to pay my respects to Father Andy Kalafsky, the pastor, and Father Hafner, who is pastor of Odessa and Van Etten but resides with Father Kalafsky. Neither was in, but I had coffee with Franciscan Brother Casimir of St. Anthony of Padua Friary on the hill. He is around 80 — alert, active and pious — and he helps Father Kalafsky several times a week. I also stopped to see the three Filippini sisters next door. St. Mary's is the only Catholic parish in Schuyler County.

St. Mary's is very *au courant* in evangelization. Each Sunday, the parish broadcasts the mass from the local radio station. The homily is geared to instruct a diverse listening audience, and the choir is excellent. The radio costs are paid by individual parishioners who wish to share in this evangelization work. Tests show that there is a wide listening audience every Sunday.

Catholics in Rochester and the suburbs may well pay tribute to the smaller parishes in villages scattered throughout the diocese: Addison, Stanley, Bradford, Sodus and Sodus Point, Wolcott, Moravia, Naples, Trumansburg, Lima, Port Byron, Weedsport and many others in the diocese. They not only preserve the faith locally, but extend it by way of faithful men and women who move to the cities, enriching the parishes there with the faith brought from home. Praise them.

Q: Did you ever get to Elmira?

A: Oh, yes. From Watkins Glen, I phoned Elmira Heights and invited myself to supper with Father Gaynor and Father Hayes, who had just moved there from the Dominican Monastery. I arrived in Lourdes about 8 p.m., to find Father Ed Golden waiting for me. Father Golden, who is chaplain at Elmira Correction Facility and resides at Lourdes, is especially valuable because many of the prisoners are Hispanics, and Father Golden has

been speaking Spanish for 14 years.

Q: What did you do in Elmira?

A: The duties were light: confessions Saturday afternoon, followed by Mass at 5:30. And the three Masses on Sunday, at 8, 9:30 and 11. Deacon George Welch preached a worthwhile instruction on baptism and Lent. Both the folk group and the traditional choir were proficient, and the congregation sang well. And, of course, I brought my religious store of booklets, beads, and prayerbooks, which are a heaven after I leave.

Q: Didn't you have time on your hands?

A: Time to use. On Saturday morning, I went to Notre Dame High School convent to meet the sisters, friends of mine for many years, and then to St. Cecilia's, where Sisters Rose and Howard, both nurses, run a day center for elderly and infirm. The center provides a change of pace for the disabled, as well as a measure of freedom to family members who need to work or such people may rest assured that their folks are well taken care of.

Dr. and Mrs. Mario Polzinetti of Seneca Falls had given me a videotape of *Mon-signor Quixote* with Alec Guinness. Saturday night at 8:30, Fathers Gaynor, Hayes, Golden and I assembled to watch the movie, which is especially moving because of its subtle insistence on the love of the Mass. It has humor, pathos, theology, humaneness and devotion. I promised to send a copy onto the Notre Dame High sisters.

Q: How was bed and board at Lourdes?

A: Relaxing. Since I am reputed to be the unofficial rectory mattress tester of the diocese, I can report the mattress was satisfactory for my huge frame. And Grace Herford, the super-cook, had prepared an elegant Sunday dinner of baked chicken and rice. I had invited Sister Josepha Twomey (assistant chaplain at the prison, where she works with Father Golden and Mr. Stanley) and also Sister Judy Kendrick, pastoral assistant, whom I remembered as a cute little girl at Immaculate Conception in Ithaca nearly 50 years ago. It took a happy hour to settle the affairs of the ecclesiastical. And it made for a good finale before I returned home to Holy Trinity, thanking God for the opportunity to have served His people outside Monroe County.

Father Walchars to return to Cenacle for April renewals

The Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal welcomes back Father John Walchars, SJ, to direct a retreat for men and women from April 10 to April 12. Born in Austria, Father Walchars has traveled to China, Japan, England, New Zealand and Canada. He is a well-known author and member of the American Society of Contemporary Writers, and is listed in *International Authors and Writers Who's Who*. The weekend includes presentations by Father Walchars, prayer, time for quiet reflection, sharing and celebration of the Eucharist. The

offering for the retreat is \$60.

Father Walchars will also conduct an evening of renewal from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on April 13, and an afternoon of renewal from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on April 14. He will give two presentations, allowing time for reflection and prayer at each session. The offering for each renewal is \$4.

For reservations and information, contact the Cenacle Ministry Office at (716) 271-8755.

Hibernians set testimonial to honor Rochester member

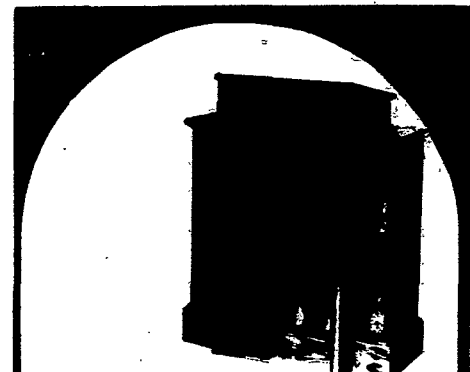


Nicholas Murphy of New York City, national president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, will be the keynote speaker at a testimonial honoring a Rochester Hibernian on Saturday, March 28.

Kevin J. Kearney, who was a four-year president of a Rochester division of that organization, will be honored for his work with the Hibernians and his active involvement in other Irish-community cultural affairs.

The gala is scheduled for Packett's Landing in Fairport. Music will be provided by the Blackthorn Ceilidh Band.

For ticket information, contact Frank Hogan, general chairman of the group, at (716) 244-9044; Bernard Connolly, vice chairman, at 392-7519; or Genny Dee, committee chairman, at 342-0755.



The Church Furniture People
Since 1928
Woerner
485 Hague St., Rochester, N.Y. 14606
716-235-1991



You may never work harder. Or get dirtier. Or get paid less. But it will be the best job you never got paid to do.

Call Red Cross today to volunteer 461-9800, ext. 259.



A Partner in Fund Raising
Space donated to the Ad Council as a public service of the Courier-Journal