

Father Richard P. McBrien

Essays in Theology



Posing delicate questions

A few recent news items have provoked some delicate questions.

● The Vatican is still embroiled in a scandal over the operation of its bank, known as the Institute of Religious Works (IOR).

Italian magistrates, investigating the 1982 collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano of Milan, have issued arrest warrants for three of IOR's officials, including its president, Archbishop Paul C. Marcinkus of Cicero, Illinois.

Investigators say they have new evidence that Archbishop Marcinkus' bank and Ambrosiano jointly operated holding companies in Luxembourg, Panama, Nassau, Peru and Costa Rica, often only through postal box operations. The investment activities of these phantom companies led to the collapse of the Ambrosiano, leaving its creditors with a loss of \$1.287 billion.

Days after a receiver moved into Ambrosiano, its president, Roberto Calvi — also known as "God's Banker" — was found hanging from a London bridge. Whether his death was a murder or a suicide remains unclear.

Another financial figure closely associated with Calvi and his bank was Michele Sindona, a Sicilian financier, who died of cyanide poisoning last year in his cell in a northern Virginia prison, where he was awaiting trial on charges that he had ordered the murder of the bank's receiver.

Francesco Pazienza, a close associate of Calvi and an informant for Italy's secret services, has alleged that Archbishop Marcinkus wrote two famous "letters of patronage" that allowed Calvi to secure loans on the international financial markets.

The Vatican has denied any culpability, but in 1984 it paid out \$240 million to Ambrosiano's foreign creditors as a "gesture of good will." At the same time, the Vatican has vigorously resisted the Italian authorities' efforts to arrest Archbishop Marcinkus, citing the 1929 Lateran Treaty (worked out between Pope Pius XI and Mussolini) which exempts certain Vatican agencies from interference by the Italian state.

Although the Vatican has made certain documents available to investigators, Archbishop Marcinkus himself has refused to be questioned directly, and notifications to Vatican bank officials, including the archbishop, have been returned unopened. According to The New York Times, the tone of the Vatican defense was "severe."

Several cardinal-members of the board of overseers for the Vatican's financial operations have called for the archbishop's replacement and a reform of the IOR, but the pope thus far is standing firmly behind Marcinkus.

Many Catholics are beginning to ask why Archbishop Marcinkus merits such a vote of confidence from the highest levels, while another archbishop, Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, accused of no crimes and guilty of no scandal, still awaits the clearing of his name and reputation.

● Members of an advisory council have urged Polish leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski to end discrimination against former Solidarity activists and grant more rights to the Catholic Church. General Jaruzelski himself appointed the council in an effort to broaden the government's political base and open a dialogue with its opponents. About 70 percent of the council are not members of the Communist Party.

We already know what Catholic activists and intellectuals in Poland think about the repressive policies of their government. One wonders if these same Catholics have thought very much about the issue of freedom within the Church, both at home and abroad, or indeed about the first Polish pope's way of governing it.

It would be fascinating to hear their views.

● Bishop Francis J. Mugavero of Brooklyn, one of the nation's finest pastoral leaders, found himself at the center of controversy over his letter banning Dignity (an organization of Catholic homosexuals) and similar groups from using churches, hospitals or colleges for meetings or religious services.

The Archdiocese of New York quickly followed suit, ordering a Jesuit-administered church in lower Manhattan to discontinue a special Mass for members of Dignity.

At the same time, the news media (Newsweek, The New York Times, Atlantic Monthly, National Catholic Reporter) have been publishing reports, prompted in part by the AIDS epidemic and various arrests and lawsuits concerning the allegedly high percentage of homosexuals in the under-45 age group of Catholic clergy.

Some are beginning to wonder if the Church's new hard line against lay Catholic homosexuals who are open about their homosexuality will be duplicated in the screening of candidates for the ordained priesthood and the episcopacy, who cannot be open about their orientation or who cannot even admit it to themselves.

Some have asked if there isn't a certain measure of ambivalence in current ecclesiastical attitudes. Such questions are exceedingly delicate, but they reflect concerns that are being expressed with increasing frequency across the United States and Canada.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Little-noted servants

Little wonder there's such confusion among many Catholics who read newspapers and magazines published by Catholic clergy and laity. The Wanderer, published by Layman Matt, is a conservative weekly that airs those woes of the Church that are caused by misdirected liberal bishops and theologians. Reading it, one might conclude that the Church is so beset by enemies from within that it is hopelessly lost.

The National Catholic Reporter (NCR) is left-wing, anti-Rome and thoroughly out of sync with the pope and traditional Catholicism. It was the first publication I've read that demeaned Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in a May, 1986, issue. The article was written by an American sister whose nose was out of joint because Mother Teresa and her sisters were spending their energies on the poor instead of joining the feminist movement to attack the ramparts and destroy the present institutional structures of both Church and secular society.

As recently as last January, NCR published a full-page satire, mocking Mother Teresa and her sisters. Curiously enough, the mockery was published only a short time before the inspiring 90-minute documentary on Mother Teresa was shown on television's Public Broadcasting System to millions. The program depicted the Christ-centered work of these dedicated women.

The Wanderer gives solace and fuel for indignation to many traditional Catholics, but it influences few of the powerful. NCR is more influential, because it is read with sympathy and acceptance by many liberal clergy and laity as well as by progressive nuns and sisters. This, I think, accounts for much of the rancor manifested at so many of these religious women.

Yet for all the baleful influence of those who would undermine the institu-

tional Church, most Catholics aren't concerned with the revolutionists. Traditional Catholics recognize that their priests are serving them well.

On March 19, Monsignor Joseph Sullivan celebrated his 75th birthday. He is retired and lives in the Gould Hotel in Seneca Falls. "I'm having a few friends for lunch on my birthday," he told me when he called. "The actions of these individuals typify the quiet service of faithful priests. Father William Gaynor, retired and residing at his home outside Auburn, celebrates Mass at St. Alphonsus and elsewhere. Syracusan Father Bob Casey, in residence at St. Alphonsus, helps in parish work there. Father Ray Wahl, in residence at Weedsport with Father George Wiant, also assists in the area.

Monsignor Sullivan does part-time service at Mercy Rehabilitation Center, Auburn. His cousin, Father Ed Wedow, pastor of Ovid and a cousin of Monsignor Sullivan, cares for the Ovid area with no publicity. (He and Monsignor Sullivan are nephews of the late Father McCall of Waterloo.)

The youthful Father Foster Rogers competently cares for St. Alphonsus parish, and also assists in renewal programs at Stella Maris Retreat House in Skaneateles. And finally, Father Paul Brennan, soon to be pastor of Sacred Heart, Auburn, after 17 years as pastor of Immaculate Conception, Rochester, has been equally distinguished by his silvery hair and "Hibernian" smile. Auburn looks forward to his coming, after the sad death of Father Tom O'Keefe.

The clergy are not the whole Church, although the shepherds are special. It is good for our people — battered by bad publicity from a few wretched events — to ponder the fact that, by and large, our priests are faithful servants of the Lord and His people.

Counseling program planned by Syracuse training center


The Onondaga Pastoral Counseling Center in Syracuse will offer a six-session seminar, the "Advanced Case Conference," to people who have completed such advanced counseling training programs as the center's professional training program. The seminar will begin Friday, April 24, 1-2:30 p.m., at the Gordon D. Hoople Institute of the Syracuse center, located at 324 University Ave., Syracuse.

The seminar will center on tapes, case notes or verbatim material of pastoral work to be presented by participants. The Rev. J. Kris Best, Ph.D., will lead the seminar, which will be limited to a maximum registration of six people.

Best will emphasize theoretical understanding of the needs of people being counseled, as well as appropriate techniques for pastoral intervention.

The seminar is one of 14 being offered this year through the Continuing Education for Pastoral Ministry programs of the Onondaga Pastoral Counseling Center, an approved training center of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and a member organization of SACEM, the Society for the Advancement of Continuing Education for Ministry.

For information or registration, contact OPCC, 324 University Ave., Syracuse, N.Y. 13210, or call (315)472-4471.



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