

Father Richard P. McBrien

Essays in Theology



Bits and pieces

Lee Iacocca, chairman of Chrysler Corporation, received a salary of \$14 million in 1986. He netted an additional \$9.6 million in stock options, bringing his total compensation for the year to \$23.6 million.

When asked about his income, Iacocca declared, "That's the American way. If little kids don't aspire to make money like I did, what the hell good is this country?"

Let's leave the "American way" stuff aside. How does this attitude fit with the Gospel, and particularly with the Lord's admonition that it shall be "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25)?

And what about the capital sin of greed? Are there no moral constraints on the accumulation of wealth?

And when was the last time you heard our self-appointed "defenders of the faith" express any moral concern whatever about such matters?

Al Campanis, the Los Angeles Dodgers' vice president for personnel, said on network television last month that blacks lack "the necessities to be, let's say, a field manager or perhaps a general manager." Unable to say precisely what those "necessities" might be, he seemed to suggest that they might be innate. Blacks aren't good swimmers, for example, because they don't have the necessary "buoyancy."

His comments, however benignly stated, were starkly racist. He was fired.

The team manager, several of the players (including some who are black), and other baseball figures expressed personal regret. Al Campanis, aged 70, had given most of his life to the Dodgers organization and was, by just about every account, a very kind and amiable gentleman.

This elicited an astute editorial comment from The New York Times. Mr. Campanis' unfortunate remarks, The Times noted, serve as a reminder that "it isn't necessary to be malicious to be prejudiced."

Something to think about.

A recent story in The New York Times reported an "unusual public protest" from several judges and Democratic party leaders, regarding judicial screening panels in Manhattan. There were charges that the panels, which had been

formed in the first place to dilute political and special-interest influence, are "ideologically biased and politically controlled."

The critics insist that the panels are "dominated by liberal ideologists and minority, women's and homosexual groups outside the usual legal establishment."

As a result, well-qualified jurists have been rejected for judicial promotions, while several of the judges who have won the panels' approval have an "unusually high number of reversals by higher courts." Two, in fact, have been "admonished and censured" for misconduct.

The moral of the story is that left-wing ideologists are no different from right-wing ideologists. For both, ideology is always more important than character and competence.

That moral applies to the Church as well as to the state, to episcopal appointments as well as to judicial appointments.

I received a letter the other day from a relatively young Notre Dame alumnus (class of '77). He was disturbed by an article I wrote for the current issue of Notre Dame Magazine.

I had been asked by the editors to do an analytical piece on the rift between the Vatican and the Catholic Church in the United States. They liked it, and gave it the title, "The Hard-line Pontiff."

One alumnus didn't like the piece. "Pope John Paul II is a hard-line pontiff," he wrote, "for the same reason that Jesus was a hard-line Messiah, and Christ preached to us the danger of being a 'lukewarm' Christian."

I don't like to see the Lord referred to as "hard-line" in any context, but if one insists, then let the hard line be drawn in the right place: a hard line against greed, a hard line against hypocrisy and a hard line against the abuse of religious authority. (Read Luke 23 — just for starters.)

But there's more. "It almost makes me wonder," my correspondent continued, "if the clergy in America will have their own opinions of how things should be in heaven. Let me tell you, Pope John Paul is a pussycat."

Think about that. God is up there just waiting to settle accounts. No plea bargaining. No probation. No reduced charges. No mercy.

On second thought, perhaps "hard-line Messiah" fits after all. But in what religion?

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



The Mormons

Q. Did you see the documentary entitled "The Mormons?"

A. Yes. It was broadcast by WXXI-TV 21 at 10 p.m. on May 18. I was filled with admiration and indignation and downheartedness.

Q. What a peculiar combination. Why?

A. My mixed feelings stem from the fact that the Mormons can have the devotion not just of elderly followers, but of youth, while we Catholics mollycoddle our youth, trying to keep them active in the Church with entertainment and fun, and only a modicum of expectation that they be evangelists of the faith. Thirty thousand young Mormon men — and a few women — leave their homes at the age of 18 or 19 to serve as missionaries for two years. They are not supported by the Mormon Church but by their own families. They are everywhere: South America, Africa, Europe, the Far East, even Ireland. And they have many successes.

Q. Well what's your trouble?

A. My trouble? It's your trouble. It's a trouble of of the whole Church! There are practically no expectations of missionary endeavor from our youth. Do you know of any parish or Catholic school that expects it?

Q. Doesn't the Church have anything similar to the Mormon system of evangelization?

A. No. There are a few good things: the Jesuit volunteers, papal volunteers; some high school groups that go to Appalachia or similar places to help the poor. They are kind and noble, but that is not quite the evangelization of St. Paul, Peter Canisius, Father Damien and his Brother Dutton, or the original Maryknoll Sisters and Franciscan Sister Missionaries. We do have Genesis, Exodus and similar programs to deepen the personal faith of teenagers. But overall, isn't that pretty skimpy, considering that our Lord gave the commission to all of us to bring His gospel to all nations? None of these are midly comparable to that army of 30,000 neat, attractive, well-behaved young Mormons leaving every year for two years, beating the bushes around the world for a denomination founded in the 1820s by Joseph Smith in Palmyra, N.Y.

"These thousands of converts to the Mormon Church do not take their new allegiance lightly," historian Will Whalen comments. "To enter the Church, the convert must give up all tobacco, liquor, coffee, tea and even cola drinks. He must agree to tithe his gross income. He must attend church services regularly and pledge loyalty to the Mormon hierarchy" (*The*

Mormons, p. 5).

Q. Well, why is the Catholic Church so remiss in youthful evangelization?

A. I suppose part of the reason is the lack of general hierarchical direction, and part of it is a dull perception of the faith, even among students from Catholic elementary and high schools. Part of it may even be due to lack of inspiration. Recently, a fine youth from Syracuse stopped to see me. He is 18 years old and spent four years at Christian Brothers Academy (CBA) in Syracuse.

"If someone asked you why you are a Catholic, what would you say?" I inquired.

"Probably that I was born and brought up in a Catholic family."

"But you could quit," I suggested.

"Some do?"

"Oh, no," he replied. "I am happy to be a Catholic."

The obvious answer didn't occur to him: "I am a Catholic because I am convinced that Jesus Christ is the Lord, that He established the Catholic Church and that He continues His work of teaching, sanctifying and saving souls through His Church."

"What kind of religion course did you have at CBA?" I asked next.

"Well, one year was on the Old Testament and another on the New Testament," he answered. "The third was on morality and the fourth on marriage."

"And no year of the Catholic Church?" I countered. "On the what, why, where and when of its beginnings and development? No study of the Vatican II document on the Church?"

"I suppose some of it came out in the Bible studies," he allowed.

"It seems to have come out quite vaguely," I observed. "I wonder why they didn't take the Vatican II document on the Church, which gives clearly the what, why, where and when of the Church. It even has the phrase we learned in catechism, as the marks of the Church — 'The Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic' — and adds a further note: 'unique!'"

As he was leaving, I gave him a copy of *The Manner is Ordinary*, the autobiography of Father John LaFarge, SJ, to broaden his understanding of the Church. "Have your father read this, too," I added. "It will be my mother," he answered, smiling. "She reads books. She will tell my father what's in it."

That tinkled a bell in my belfry. For years I have proclaimed that one of the best Catholic monthlies is *Columbia*, the *Knights of Columbus* magazine. It is well-written and thoroughly Catholic, but I suspect the men don't read it. Let's get the women to read it, so they can tell their husbands.

Mercy sister taking final vows

Sister Karlien Bach will profess final vows as a Sister of Mercy on Saturday, June 6, at 7 p.m. in St. Rita's Church, Webster.

The daughter of Greg and Susan Bach of Rochester, Sister Bach graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School in 1975. She entered the Mercy congregation in 1979 after

earning a bachelor of arts degree from Nazareth College.

Sister Jean Marie Kearse, superior general of the Sister of Mercy, will officiate at the rite of profession.

Father Timothy Keating, CSSR, will be the main celebrant, with Fathers John Reif and John Zimmerman concelebrating.

Girl Scouts seek alumnae

Former Girl Scouts are being sought to help Girl Scouting mark its 75th anniversary.

Questionnaires asking women to record their scouting memories are now being sent out to business and professional groups,

women's organizations and older adult programs. Alumnae who return questionnaires will receive a 75th anniversary commemorative decal and invitations to the opening of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum exhibit on Girl Scouting, scheduled for June 12. Call (716)454-7010 for information.

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