

Father Richard P. McBrien

Essays in Theology



The pope's second visit

Pope John Paul II arrives this week for his second formal pastoral visit to the United States. The second trip will be unlike the first in one important respect — the Holy Father is no longer an unknown quantity.

When he came in 1979, he was the first non-Italian pope in centuries, with a personal background that excited the curiosity of the press, the electronic media and the general public.

But Pope John Paul II has been bishop of Rome now for almost nine full years. He has a pastoral and administrative track record. Catholics who are actively involved in the life of their Church are either strongly supportive or acutely uneasy about his policies, his major appointments and the general course he has set for the Church at large.

Many other Catholics, of course, simply aren't interested in arguments about papal policies. For them, the pope is either a public figure who excites curiosity and pride, or he is a kind of quasi-divine figure, a mystical person with a relationship to God that is uniquely intimate and whose every word and gesture put us in direct contact with the heavenly realm.

Many Hispanic Catholics in Miami, San Antonio and Los Angeles, and many Poles in Detroit will certainly come out to see him, to applaud him, to pray with him and to be blessed by him.

But many others will be inclined to ignore the visit. They may catch a glimpse of him on television or read a few items in the newspaper, but by and large they will be relatively indifferent.

Why? Because many Catholics who are actively involved in the pastoral life of the Church feel that this pope has set too conservative a course for the Church; that he has made some unfortunate episcopal appointments, and that he has allowed the impression to get around that he really doesn't think much of American Catholics.

They feel that the Holy Father is always trying to rein us in — especially theologians, women (religious and lay alike), divorced-and-remarried, resigned priests, gays, and pastoral ministers at every level who reach out to the alienated with sensitivity and compassion, and who are willing to stretch the rules on occasion if that's what it takes.

Such Catholics don't like what happened to Father Curran at The Catholic University of America, nor what happened to

Archbishop Hunthausen in Seattle. Neither do they like the attempted crackdown on the Jesuits and the Franciscans, and on congregations of religious women in general.

They are troubled by the removal of imprimaturs from books they regard as moderate or middle-of-the-road, not so much because they think these books are terrific, but because of the censorious spirit these disciplinary moves betray.

For the moment at least, these Catholics are satisfied with the way the Hunthausen matter was settled, but one correction doesn't necessarily portend a fundamental change of attitude and direction. They remain skeptical.

In light of the great situational difference between USA-I and USA-II, the Holy Father is faced with a challenge and an opportunity — to recapture the minds and hearts of those in the center of the Church in America.

If the pope reaches out to them, most will undoubtedly be ready, even eager, to grasp his hand of reconciliation. That's what Christianity is all about.

Negatively, the Holy Father will want to avoid all semblance of scolding and finger wagging. One has every reason to believe that he will not use this visit to admonish U.S. Catholics.

Positively, the Holy Father will want to express his admiration and gratitude for the great vitality of the Catholic Church in America.

He will want to call attention to the enormous growth of its lay ministries since Vatican II, to the extraordinary generosity of American Catholics toward the poor of the world, to the remarkable achievement of Catholic higher education, and to the strongly positive leadership of the U.S. bishops on such morally momentous issues as nuclear war and the economy.

And in the bicentennial year of the U.S. Constitution, he will want to point with pride to the American system of due process, of free speech, and of respect for diversity and pluralism. These values have provided fertile ground indeed for the growth of the Church.

It can only strengthen the Catholic Church in America, therefore, if this second papal visit is a healing rather than a divisive event. One has reason to hope for the former.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Plea for an out-of-place pilot

From a Navy pilot:

"I guess it's been awhile since I've given you a sample of my handwriting. Please be assured that I haven't converted to Islam or anything. I do feel that my Catholicism is being put to the best here in this Southern diocese, though. I told someone the other day of my visit to the nearest parish, Holy Spirit. I had difficulty finding it because it seems to be modeled after a doctors' office complex rather than a church. There is no cross, no crucifix inside or out, no statues, no tabernacle, etc., etc. This is not a temporary building; it is the local conception of the Catholic Church (the word "Roman" is pointedly omitted. In fact, I believe the prayer for the pope was left out of the canon of the Mass.) More depressing yet is to learn that this church is considered one of the more conservative parishes.

"So much for the bad news. The reason this is all so hard for me to take is the exhilarating time I had in Italy the month before. We (the Naval Air Force Choir) sang the Mass in St. Peter's; attended Mass with the pope in the square at St. John Lateran, followed by the Corpus Christi procession through the streets to St. Maria Maggiore; gave a concert at St. Maria supra Minerva near the Pantheon. And on, and on. Too much to describe.

"The high point for me, though, was the Mass in the Basilica at Assisi — great art, great architecture, great music and great liturgy all rolled into one.

"While home last weekend, I saw a videotape from Medjugorje, including the filming of the kids during the actual — alleged — appearance of the Virgin. This seems to me a very important thing going on, and I wonder at the lack of mention of it in this country. One Catholic woman here dismissed it as one of those "old church" things.

"My apologies for the long silence. Greetings to Father Hart and Mary Ann Penlon."

The writer of the above letter is a handsome, gifted man of deep faith and love for the Church. He earned a degree in music (organ) at the Eastman School of Music, then a degree in engineering at the University of Rochester, and last May received a commission and pilot's wings from the

Navy. Though loaded with talent, knowledge and skill in music, none of the Navy chaplains found use for him, preferring the cha-cha music of progressive liturgists. Then he landed by assignment in one of the most progressive dioceses in the United States. What to do with all that talent being wasted, and a devout person being spiritually crucified by a church that looks at Rome askance, if not with downright hostility? Well, no use writing hands and doing nothing, so I wrote to a good friend about the matter.

To Miss Margaret Haskell, a Southern friend:

"Will you do me and the Church a favor? My pilot friend is 26 years old, handsome and modest. He got a degree from the Eastman School of Music, then went to the U of R and got an engineering degree; from there to the Naval Air Force, and last May got a commission and wings as a pilot. So you see he is no slouch. And he agonizes over the madness within the Church.

"I am enclosing his address and telephone number. From it you can figure out his location. Is he anywhere near Abbot McCaffrey, and if he is, is there some way of connecting the two? I think he is awaiting some kind of Navy assignment and has time on his hands. He has a car and could drive to the abbot, whose ecclesial wave is that of my pilot friend. Although the pilot is a skilled organist and choir director, the chaplains in the Navy have given him the cold shoulder, preferring the cha-cha songs to the beauty and sacredness of authentic Church music. He is ready to use his talents for the Church, but has to have an opportunity.

"Anyway, will you telephone him and raise his spirits by letting him know that there are at least some in his area who are Roman Catholics, enthusiastic about the pope and the magisterium, and that you share his love of the Church? Abbot McCaffrey might put him into a useful track. Also, will you send the present address of Father Kelly? He gave the retreat to our diocesan priests last May, and his doctrine was solid and his presentation an inspiration. Some good is in your diocese, Deo gratias?"

Series of fall trips planned for Finger Lakes S/D/W groups

A series of fall trips is being planned by and for people who are again single due to a divorce or death. The separated, divorced and widowed groups of the Finger Lakes region are planning the following one- two- and three-day trips in western New York and Canada: Lake George, Sept. 18-20, shopping, cruise and dinner theatre; Letchworth State Park, Oct. 24, lunch at the Glen Iris Inn; Toronto with

shopping at Eaton Mall and two dinner shows; and the Festival of Lights at Niagara Falls, Canada.

People interested in a trip or special event should register by contacting Hazel, (315) 789-1640, or Carl Ritz at the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, (315) 789-2686, for details and costs as well as departure and arrival times.

Orientation sessions planned for Strong Memorial Hospital

The Department of Chaplaincy Service at Strong Memorial Hospital will conduct orientation sessions for clergy and parish staff members on Wednesday, September 16, from 2 to 3 p.m. or Thursday, September 17, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

members who are new to the Rochester area and to those who wish to become more familiar with the hospital.

Those interested in registering or who have any questions can call (716) 275-2187 any weekday between 9 a.m. and 2:45 p.m.

The sessions are also open to parish staff

Book concerning family values, bishops' pastoral now available

The Christian Family Movement has announced the publication of a new book for small parish groups. *Family Values in the Marketplace* is a 15-meeting program, which focuses on the U.S. Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on the economy.

The book draws on the pastoral to deal with issues that affect the family in the marketplace. It includes such topics as bringing Christ to the marketplace, unemployment, parenting for

peace and justice, unions, immigration and other challenging issues.


Family Values in the Marketplace was introduced at the biennial Christian Family Movement convention, July 23-26, at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. The book was written by a team of authors and edited by Frank and Pat Gacnik of Arvada, Calif.

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PAPAL VISIT '87

Pope John Paul II's pastoral visit to the Catholic Church in the United States, September 10-20, 1987, is offered exclusively to the Diocese of Rochester by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), the Florida-Waterbury Diocesan Network (FWDN), and the Catholic Television Communications Network of America (CTNA).

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