

Editorial & Opinion

The prescription for a healthy spiritual life — balance

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

The feasts that begin this month, All Saints and All Souls Days, raise up themes such as belonging, purpose and the lasting significance of our wide ranging experiences of life, that are important to many people I know. It's the rare day that I don't meet someone who deals directly or indirectly with one or another of these themes.

I met a business person recently who spoke of the deep fatigue he experienced simply trying to hold things together, himself included, amid the varied demands he experienced day after day. Family obligations, social responsibilities, the competition of business — all place heavy claims on his physical and spiritual energies. Although he enjoys each of these dimensions of his life, he acknowledges that the sum total of the demands they make on him is greater than his reserve of energies. And so he finds himself less effective in each area of life. More importantly, he notices that he has less of that interior freedom that is the source of our human capacity to play and to laugh, to dream and to love.

When we spoke of these things in our relatively brief conversation, I had the feeling that he had already gone beyond an awareness of the issues he needs to face to some action steps to deal with them. For example, he had already spoken at length with his wife

Along the Way



about the pressures he had been experiencing. He had had no doubt she would be sympathetic and supportive, but he was overwhelmed by her understanding and support for the changes he wanted to make. Having experienced that strong encouragement, he was able to decline two requests for his services that would have placed an even greater claim on his resources.

His willingness to speak to me so humbly and honestly about his life was a wonderful gift not only because it allowed me to participate in some manner in the joy he experienced in his new direction, but because it encouraged me to keep that kind of healthy self awareness in my own life. I know that, if I am not careful, my life can easily become a succession of events that lose significance because I do not take the

time or find the quiet to let their deeper meaning rest in my heart. To fail to do that, I believe, is to drain the soul just as failure to eat starves the body or failure to rest the body exhausts it.

My guess is that you can identify in some way with what my friend is trying to deal with. If you can, I hope you will take encouragement from his initiatives and the good results he has realized thus far. Surely each of us has had to find her or his own way out of the trap of hyperactivity. It won't happen unless we want it to. But it will be the easier if we have the understanding and support of those who know us best and love us.

One last note. I find it helpful to work on this by reviewing the pattern of a month rather than by examining the activities of each day. If I don't pray, read, recreate, work, rest, eat, enjoy friendships, etc., in proper measure on a given day, I don't panic. Emergencies do happen. All of us need to be flexible and generous enough to respond to the unexpected and not be too lazy. But if over the course of the month I look back and find that I have been noticeably delinquent in one or more of these categories, then I know that I am not living freely enough to give myself. I am just doing things.

But we can work on that, can't we?
Peace to all.

Letters

Historian seeks details on priest

To the editor:

The bishop of Buffalo, Most Rev. Edward D. Head, has been given leave by the Holy See to open an inquiry possibly leading to the canonization of the Buffalo priest known as the "Padre of the Poor," Monsignor Nelson G. Baker (1841-1937).

From 1892 until his death, Father Baker was the director, and in some case the founder, of a number of charitable institutions located at Lackawanna, N.Y. Today this cluster, still supported by nationwide donations, includes a hospital of 216 beds, a combination residence for unwed mothers and agency for arranging adoptions; Baker Hall for young men in need of supervision; and group homes for unmarried young women. Up until 1956, there was also an orphanage which, during its century of existence, raised thousands of boys.

Even before he undertook this expanding charitable work, Father Baker was considered a man of unusual holiness. Miracles were attributed to him, although he gave credit for any cures to Our Lady of Victory. In her honor, he erected the handsome Lackawanna Basilica of Our Lady of Victory in 1926.

When Steuben County was still a part of the Buffalo diocese, Nelson Baker served for one year as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in Corning. Later on, many people of the Rochester diocese were beneficiaries of his institutions.

The process leading to a person's proclamation as a saint is long and complicated. The first step is to secure copies of everything written by the individual in question, especially letters. Anecdotes, first-hand or second-hand, are also desired.

I invite any readers who possess such writings or who are acquainted with such anecdotes to communicate them to me at 4536 St. Paul Boulevard, Rochester, N.Y. 14617. My personal telephone is (716) 338-1602. Many thanks.

Father Robert F. McNamara
Archivist, Diocese of Rochester

PEACE

...is coming to terms with the difference between, "I need" and "I want."

so what's the big problem?



Resents Father McBrien's statements on central object of the faith

To the editor:

I am writing in response to Father McBrien's October 1 column, "The object of Catholic faith." I resent his statement: "Catholic aren't people who believe in the pope" I am a Catholic and I do "believe" in the pope as *Vicar of Christ*. I think we Catholics are smart enough to realize that John Paul is representative of Jesus Christ and that it is Christ that we believe in as God. Wherever the pope goes, he is witnessing to Christ and does so for the glory of God and not for his own benefit. Everything that Jesus has taught, the pope has been preaching on his many trips, and his messages have always strengthened my faith and deepened my love for Jesus.

Father McBrien also writes: "There is an implicit shift in the central object of Catholic faith from Jesus Christ to the pope." I disagree.

Again, the pope is the Vicar of Christ on earth, and we Catholics don't worship the pope as Father McBrien seems to suggest. In reading his column, one gets the feeling of deep resentment on his part for the papacy and its "rules and regulations" and of our love for the pope.

I really feel that the *Courier* should seriously and prayerfully consider replacing Father McBrien's column with something less controversial. There is enough controversy in the world today, and we certainly don't need it in our Catholic newspaper which at one time was a beautiful, spiritual newspaper. I feel that you have a responsibility to your readers to provide them with columns that are spiritual and non-controversial. It is obvious by the number of

letters you receive that Father McBrien's columns are upsetting a great many people. Jesus wants us to have peace, and Father McBrien's articles most of the time do not leave us feeling peaceful.

You could replace his column with articles on the Blessed Mother, as this is the Marian Year, or with articles written by people who have been to Medjugorje, as this is the "hottest" item in the Catholic world today and which we find very little written about the *Courier*.

Jean DeJoy
Garro Street Extension
Auburn

Likens McBrien's theology to renovated sanctuary

To the editor:

I can no longer repress the necessity for expressing my views on your columnist Father Richard P. McBrien.

He has been a scandal to me since the early post-Vatican II years when I was exposed — in St. Bernard's Seminary, no less — to a videotape in which he set forth his view of what the Church is meant to be under Vatican II.

It is such as he who may take much of the credit for emptying our seminaries of priest candidates and our convents of nuns. His pre-visit statement that the Pope should not plan on coming here to scold the "American" Church but would have to "butter up" its

doughty members, was arrogant in the extreme.

His vaunted "right" to dissent from Church teachings is not denied him. The woods are full of people who dissent from the teachings of the Church, but most of them have the grace not to call themselves "Catholic" or, heaven forefend, "Roman Catholic."

The quality of Father McBrien's "Catholicism" equals that of the renovated "sanctuary" of St. Mary's church, and neither reflects well on the bishop of this diocese.

Maurice T. Brunner
St. Paul Street
Rochester

C-J Letters Policy

The Courier-Journal wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all *signed, original* letters about current issues affecting Church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the Church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: Letters to the Editor, Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.