

Columnists

Report to a returning pastor

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Report to Father Richard Orlando, Lyons:
I appreciate your confidence in giving me the care of your parish for a precious month, January 11 to February 14. Let me make a brief report.

During my stay, I visited all of the sick and housebound, and roamed about the village, in restaurants and bars, as a witness to Christ and the Catholic Church. I also made a morning coffee visit to the Soda Spa to feel the pulse of the village.

Perhaps the highlight was Father Albert Shamon's program on Medjugorje. Joanne Gutchow and Jane Henning had gone to Marion to hear him speak and returned thrilled. So I said: "Well, why not have him for our Lyons people?" I phoned him on Wednesday, and the only open date was Sunday evening, Feb. 7, 10 days later. This fitted in well, since we had over a week to advertise his coming.

We announced it at the Masses the next Sunday, and several Jeremiahs said: "Oh, the Lyons people will not come to that." It surprised many that 172 came, which is nearly a third of the total Sunday Mass attendance. How many parishes could gather a third of the congregation for a special event? It shows a spiritual vitality in your parish.

Father Shamon gave a fine presentation, with the earnestness and enthusiasm which is so Shamonian. Later, I asked Tom Dahms who runs the video rental store in Lyons to get some Medjugorje tapes so people with video-cassette recorders can play them in their homes.

My first Communion call was on Art Blanch who was having trouble breathing. When I got to his house on Elmer Street, he was watching Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network. He told me it is on daily from noon to 6 p.m., and he and his wife watch it constantly. It even has the rosary daily at 3 p.m. I phoned the Finger Lakes Broadcasting Company in Geneva, which airs the program, and discovered that it reaches four counties. I think some group in Canandaigua and Newark is responsible for getting the program on. Doesn't it make you wonder that these mid-diocesan counties have the Catholic program and the bishop's own city does not?

On the Right Side

While I was lord of the rectory, I invited some friends in for dinner. Among them were Fathers Heisel, Wohrab, Roach, William Cosgrove and Nellis. Father John Dillon — who writes an outlandish Sunday bulletin that everyone reads with interest — dropped in for coffee.

Two special friends, Bill Mull and Bill Cook of Waterloo also came. I first knew them eight years ago while filling in for Father Shamon. Bill Mull, Father Tom Mull's youngest brother, was in the eighth grade then. He worked evenings in the rectory, taking care of the phone and the door. His buddy, Bill Cook, would be with him. Eight years later, Bill M. is taller and sports a beard; and Bill C. weighs about 180 pounds. I phoned to invite them to dinner Tuesday. Your darling cook, Dottie Lindsey, served a good dinner, and we talked for two hours about the Church.

Knowing their earnestness, I said: "I often feel sorry for the people in the pews who have to listen to our homilies. Sometimes priests go off half-cocked, projecting their pet ideas rather than the teachings of the Church. Tell me, if you had the pulpit some Sunday, what would you talk about?" Bill M. said: "I'm all right on a one-to-one basis, but I couldn't open my mouth before a crowd." Bill C. pondered, and finally said decisively: "I would talk about Catholic education. I went through St. Mary's in Waterloo and DeSales High in Geneva, and have come to realize what a great thing an education in a Catholic school is." As he expanded on the subject, I am confident no one in the diocesan education office could present a more impressive case than did Bill Cook.

Welcome home, and thank you for letting me take care of your flock.

It's just a matter of semantics

By Father Richard P. McBrien

Conflicts in the Church are often no more than a battle of words. People on each side seem to have their own stock of favorite words. They enjoy using them, and they take particular delight in seeing the reaction of the other side when they do use them. It's like flashing a crucifix at Count Dracula.

I've compiled below three alphabetized lists of words — one that some progressive or liberal Catholics wince at; another that brings a scowl to the faces of many conservative Catholics; and a third that seems to disturb neither side.

I. Words that liberals don't like: absolute, abstinence, adoration, anathema, apostolic, ascetical, authority, catechism, certitude, chastity, Commandments, *communio* (as opposed to community, which liberals do like), contemplation, deposit of faith, guilt, hell here, hierarchical, humility, infallibility, institutional, laws, magisterium, Marian, merit, obedience, *Opus Dei*, orthodoxy (though they do like orthopraxy), penance, prayer (but only because of the way conservatives use it), priesthood (presbyterate is preferred), pro-life, repentance, Roman, sacrifice, scandal, sensuality (but sexuality is fine), temptation, tradition, Trent and virginity.

II. Words conservatives don't like: accommodation, American, anthropological, charisma (although they do like charismatics), collegiality, community (although they take particular pleasure in *communio*), compassion, compromise, conciliar, conscience, contingency, coresponsibility, development of doctrine, dissent, doubt, ecumenical, existential, experience, feminist, freedom, historicity (and various forms thereof), humanism, ideological, integrity, Jesuits, justice (especially social justice), liberation, love, mercy, moderate, modernity, myth, orthopraxy, participatory, pastoral, patriarchal, peace, People of God, pluralism, poverty (and the poor), *praxis*, presbyterate, prophetic, prudential, reconciliation, reform, renewal, rights, secularism, sexuality (sensuality they like), subsidiarity, theologian, tolerance, triumphalism, values, Vatican II, world and women.

III. Words neither side seems to mind: Bible, Catholic, charity, Christ, Church,

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covenant, discipleship, Eucharist, eternal life, faith, God, Gospel, grace, holiness, Holy Spirit, hope, incarnation, kingdom of God, mystery, providence, Real Presence, redemption, resurrection, revelation, sacrament, salvation, spirituality, Trinity, virtue, vocation, unity, and word (as in Word of God).

Liberal and conservative Catholics aren't going to stop using their favorite words. It's almost second nature to them now. Nor should they be required or even expected to completely change their vocabularies.

But they could perhaps show a little more sensitivity to the other side when they do use their special words. At the very least, they could take no pleasure — *gaudium pravum*, the old moral textbooks called it — in the discomfort their words create.

Secondly, each side could, from time to time, use some words from the other side's list, but without putting a perverse spin on the usage. In fact, that's worse than not using the other side's words at all.

For example, a conservative bishop attempts to justify his decision to fire a progressive priest from a diocesan position by calling it a decision of "conscience" knowing full well that such an appeal will infuriate his progressive critics within the diocese.

Thirdly, both sides can make a particular effort to draw as much as possible from the third list. There are still many words in the Catholic vocabulary that are blessedly free of polemical overtones. They serve as a means of communication, rather than as weapons of intra-church conflict.

When words are spoken with love rather than hostility, they have the capacity to ignite "the spark of faith" in the hearts of believers and unbelievers alike (Vatican II).

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