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How long does grief last?

It is not possible to give an absolute answer to this question. Every individual reacts to loss a bit differently. We can expect intense grief during the first few weeks after a loss. In the following three or four months our feelings of grief may be strong as we encounter many reminders of the death. After that we will begin doing new things for ourselves, yet continue to miss our loved one. We may become frustrated as we attempt to do things the deceased once did for us. As a second year without the deceased begins we may find our feelings of loneliness and sadness have lessened. As we develop new relationships and do more things for ourselves, our grief will diminish and we will be able to restore hope and happiness to our lives. Our grief, however, may never completely disappear as our memories linger.

Should you feel the need to discuss your feelings with a trained counselor, please call on us for referrals.

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Columnists

Distinguishing temptation from sin

By Father Richard P. McBrien

This week's essay is about Martin Scorsese's controversial new film, "The Last Temptation of Christ."

But I hasten to say this isn't a review. I haven't seen the film, and so I can make no independent judgment about its artistic quality or its allegedly blasphemous character.

What interests me here are the negative reactions that have been reported in the press or presented on television. They seem to fall into two categories: concerns related to Jesus' sexuality and concerns related to Jesus' self-knowledge.

The critics — evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants on the one hand, and conservative Catholics on the other — seem to believe that the film defames the Lord, first, by showing him as a sexually active male — albeit only in scenes of fantasy — and secondly, by showing him in a state of confusion and doubt about his divine identity and messianic mission — the "wimp" factor.

What is really behind these concerns? Do the critics mean to imply that Jesus did not have normal sexual drives, emotions, interests, fantasies, and desires?

If so, the critics are, in effect, denying Jesus' humanity, for sexuality is an intrinsic component of our human nature, and Jesus had a full human nature.

That Jesus was endowed with a complete human nature is a dogma of the Church, defined at the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 against a group known as the Monophysites, those who held to the "one nature" in Christ, that nature being divine.

Included also in the condemnation was the second-century heresy known as Docetism, a term derived from the Greek word which means "to seem." For the Docetists, Jesus only "seemed" to be human.

According to Catholic dogma, therefore, it is just as heretical to deny the humanity of Jesus as it is to deny the divinity of Jesus. That may come as a surprise to some "orthodox" Catholics.

Indeed, both the humanity and the divinity are absolutely essential to the mystery of the Incarnation. If Christ was not truly human, then he could not have redeemed us. "What was not assumed was not saved," the fathers of the early Church had argued.

Is there perhaps something more behind the critics' concern about Jesus' sexuality? Do they mean to suggest that sexual temptation itself is sinful? Or that Jesus was above such temptation?

That would contradict the New Testament itself: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every



During a visit to St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, Catholic Women's Club Member Mary Anne Sterling helps Joe Mealey of the house's general staff store food donations brought by club members.

Women's club begins drive

The Catholic Women's Club of Rochester, Inc., has begun a drive to boost membership as a prelude to the celebration of its 70th anniversary in 1989.

The club is a service organization that engages in a number of activities, including supplying food for St. Joseph's House of Hospitality; collecting and delivering clothing and household items to Melita House, Bethany House and St. Peter's Kitchen; rolling and mailing bandages to Third-World countries; awarding scholarships to students attending Catholic high schools; and making items for residents of St. Ann's Home and the Heritage.

For information about membership, contact Emmy Porreca, 150 Edgemoor Rd., Brighton, N.Y. 14618, (716)442-1577 or 244-0140; or the club offices at 492 East Avenue, Rochester, 14607, 461-9173.

Essays in Theology

way, yet without sin," (Hebrews 4:15).

The mentality that links sexuality with sinfulness has deep roots, of course, in the history of the Church. In fact, it is an outgrowth of one of the oldest Christian heresies, known as Manichaeism.

Manichaeism conceives the universe as torn by an endless conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, spirit and matter. Locked in combat with the flesh, the spirit seeks always to be liberated from its bodily imprisonment.

Andrew Greeley's substantive review of "The Last Temptation of Christ" in *The Sunday New York Times* August 21, points out that Nikos Kazantzakis, the author of the novel on which the film is based, was himself influenced by Manichaeism, as are many of the film's picketers.

Contrary to Kazantzakis, for whom flesh and spirit are constantly at war with each other, Greeley notes that the real conflict is between our fearful, self-protecting instincts and our generous, self-giving propensities. "Jesus taught us not how to overcome the flesh, but rather how to give ourselves to and for others."

The second major concern of the critics has to do with Jesus' self-knowledge. They seem to hold that if Jesus were ever in doubt or in a state of confusion, especially about something so central as his messianic destiny, then he could not have been truly divine.

The critics believe Jesus must have known everything about himself and his mission, right from the moment of his conception.

That assumption springs from the same theological and doctrinal errors that give rise to the misunderstandings about Jesus' sexuality. To grow in knowledge, to struggle with doubt, to experience confusion and to make mistakes are all part of human nature. And Jesus had an integral human nature. He was like us in all things except sin.

There is nothing sinful about doubt, intellectual struggle and even error. Whether the film goes too far in portraying Jesus as tormented, worried and indecisive is irrelevant. Jesus did know what it was to face the unknown and to experience doubt.

If we question that, we should also question the assurance given in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Lord "has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin."

Mercy Sisters mark 20-year anniversary of High Acres gift

The Sisters of Mercy invite friends, benefactors, and especially Geneva-area residents to an open house on Sunday, Sept. 25, from 2-5 p.m., celebrating the gift 20 years ago of the congregation's retreat at High Acres.

Formerly known as the old Snell Farm, which was built in 1908, High Acres is situated on a high knoll overlooking Seneca Lake and Geneva. The property was given to the Rochester congregation in 1968 by the Rufus Dryer family as a place for retreats and relaxation. Since then, the Sisters of Mercy have also opened High Acres to diocesan and parish groups.

In addition to congregation members and friends, members of the Dryer family are expected to attend the open house, according to Sister Nancy Whitley, RSM, coordinator of the event.

Civic club to hold Dante Ball

The Italian Women's Club of Rochester, Inc., will hold its annual Dante Ball on Saturday, September 24, at the Genesee Plaza Holiday Inn. The champagne hour will begin at 6:30 p.m.; dinner will be served at 7:30 and dancing will follow.

Money raised through the ball and donations provides support for the club's annual Dante scholarships. This year's recipients are Elaine Marie Della Done of St. John Fisher College, Karen Marie DiBiasi of the University of Rochester, and Marie Cannizzo of Nazareth College.

Tickets for the ball cost \$32.50 per person. For further information, contact Lee LaDelfa, (716)342-6903, or Mary Polvino, 225-9304.