

# History, experience lend healthy perspective

Last week I wrote about how a knowledge of the history of the church in the United States can help us to understand and to keep in perspective some of the issues and problems which we are facing today. History tells us that our mothers and fathers in the faith brought great courage and generosity to the difficult challenges which lay before them. I believe that such knowledge encourages us that we can and will do the same.

If history teaches us a great deal about perspective and proportion, so does a knowledge of the contemporary experience of other local churches or dioceses. Each local church has a distinct character or personality much as each parish or family or individual does. Such differences, I believe, give the church great vitality (as they do in parishes and families) because they are gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the individual members for the good of all.

But for all of these wonderful differences, we hold much in common. We celebrate our sacramental life. We find our common human source and sign of unity in

the Bishop of Rome. We profess a common creed. And at a different level of life we deal with a broad range of common issues. When I attend meetings with the other bishops of New York state, we talk about a declining number of priests and the adjustments we need to make in light of that fact. We speak of the encouraging signs we see all around us, of a fuller participation in the life of the church of a wide range of people; and of adjustments we need to make in the organization of Catholic schools in view of factors strongly affecting them; and of what a challenge it is to serve the unity of faith and charity of our communities in this very complex age. When we meet twice a year at the national level we discover that we're all facing the same basic issues and that there are no quick, painless solutions to any of them. It's a comfort to realize that, not because it makes our problems any easier, but because it indicates that the problems we experience are symptomatic of the age and culture in which we live.

And so, when I think of the problems we have because of a declining number of

clergy, I find it helpful to think of our sister Diocese of Tabasco. Their 75 priests to serve 1,500,000 Catholics help put in perspective our 230 priests to serve 400,000 Catholics. It does not make our problem less, much less does it make it go away. But, it does put it in a more encouraging perspective.

When I think about the rather intense and sometimes painful experience of reorganizing our Catholic schools, I think of my home Diocese of Albany and the other dioceses of our state, and I realize that we are all having much the same experience. The details are different because the histories, resources and personalities differ, but the fundamental journey is very much the same.

It is helpful to have the perspective of history. It is an encouragement to know the experience of the other local churches. What is the most important is that we remember the promise of Jesus to be with us always. There is no more healthy or freeing perspective than that.

Peace to all.



## Along The Way

## Reader warns column's erroneous teaching will bear eternal results

To the editor:

In Father Richard McBrien's column of March 23 ("What kind of church did Jesus intend to establish?"), the faithful are provided with material to bolster their Catholic portfolios in case they are naive enough to imagine that such stuff will win the hearts and minds of the weak, the worldly or alas, the witches. The Catholic Church à la McBrien and other self-identified religious "moderates" was not instituted by Christ; he didn't know it would last this long; nor did He establish the papacy, ordain priests or bishops, offer the Mass or institute the sacraments.

Is it apparent yet that the logical conclusion of modernism is the extinction of the Church — except perhaps as an adjunct to Masonry which is renowned for theological pluralism, and as an alternative to abstruse New Age "liturgies"? The universal desire for the transcendental can be satisfied by the occult or Eastern mysticism, or even Protestantism, and the desire

for justice can be relieved through government programs or private initiatives. The Church's only relevance is its guarantee that its universal holiness — its one truth — is the means intended for every person to come to a relationship with God, union with God, and the eternal enjoyment of God.

If the Church can be wrong about the most basic moral requirements of the Christian, the modernists postulate, it perhaps is not what it claims to be. However it is they who are not what they claim to be — Catholic. Having charged the Church with error in the realm of moral teaching, they now challenge the supernatural nature of the Church. Pretty self-serving, slippery-sloppy theology that. Self-serving, if not truth serving. Why don't they take those Church views door-to-door and try to win some converts? Do we wonder that such theology fails to attract candidates to the priesthood, religious life, or even serious Catholics?

If truth leads souls to Christ and heaven, heresy leads them to hell. The bishops are primarily responsible for safeguarding the deposit of faith, such that truth is taught and heresy is rejected. To the extent then, that the fullness of the Christian message is rejected because it has been distorted by heresies such as those promulgated by theologians such as Father McBrien, bishops will have to answer to God. For all the souls never converted, all the sins committed in consequence; for all the despair, tepidity, cruelty, blasphemy, perversion and horrendous abuses, those consecrated and entrusted specifically by Christ to "feed my lambs" will have to answer.

Every time that Father McBrien writes a column in which error is propounded, the Gospel is diluted, and those who are mired in sin have less chance of ever coming to God. Nor can the average Catholic who is fulfilling the duties of his state in life, and raising his family, drop everything to re-

fute Father McBrien's errors almost weekly. That's not our job. Rather it is the Bishop's to see that such errors are not expounded in the first place.

Numerous Catholics continue to write the *Courier* and our Bishops pointing out the inappropriateness of the inclusion of Father McBrien's column in our diocesan paper considering his divergence from Catholic teaching in so many areas. If the faith is not taught, or is taught erroneously, the results are eternal. Nor are the consequences merely individual. They are immeasurable only in this life. Our Lord concludes his parable of the householder on this note: "There will be weeping then and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51). Elsewhere He says: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" (Romans 12:19).

Helen Ann Wagner  
Lark Street  
Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

## Christians being 'taken in' by 'killer industry'

To the editor:

Thank God for the common sense of Father Gerald Dunn for denying access to St. Theodore's pulpit to Dr. Ralph Caschetta for the purpose of expounding his views on abortion. By his own admission this "doctor" is responsible for the deaths of one to three preborn babies per week (*Democrat and Chronicle*, Jan. 3). Unfortunately one of our institutions of higher learning was not as prudent — St. John Fisher College was "taken in" and gave Caschetta his sought-after platform.

I'm wondering how many others of us are getting "taken in." Do we Christian women know the policies of our personal OB/GYN? Does he perform abortions? Do his partners? Does he refer for abortions? We have a right to know this and a Christian duty to take appropriate action — namely to find a doctor with hands and of-

fices that are clean of innocent blood.

Another way in which we could inadvertently be "taken in" is by taking part in Wegmans' United-Give-Away which directs its monies to the general fund of United Way and thus to Planned Parenthood the largest supporter of abortion nationally and locally. Not specifically designating our (United Way) employee contributions will have the same result. Lastly, and very importantly, we definitely shouldn't be the silent majority. We need to write letters to those we have chosen not to support and let them know why. When these letters start to pile up perhaps we will have reached the bottom line of this killer industry. Can we at least do this much for these little ones?

Judith Donoghue  
Eugene Street  
Rochester



## Father Cuddy's column palliates feminist agenda

To the editor:

Father Cuddy's column of April 6, covering the "fig-leaf mentality" behind gender inclusiveness was a welcome palliative to the nausea personally experienced upon hearing women — or should I say wo-persons — lectors and sometimes even priests arbitrarily alter the language of Holy Scripture to promote their feminist agenda under the guise of the much adulterated phrase of "the spirit of Vatican II."

Three cheers each for the Revs. Cuddy, Mankowski and Shamon. As for Father McBrien and his "new religion," it remains our Christian duty to pray for the misguided soul.

A.J. Annunziata  
Horseheads

## 'Peace' bill would allow legal tax resistance to arms race

To the editor:

DO YOUR TAXES HAVE TO PAY FOR WAR?

Many citizens are not required to bear arms because their consciences forbid their participation in war — and it's legal. But when citizens choose not to pay for others to bear arms, nor for the widening arms race because of their consciences which forbid it — it's illegal!

TO HELP MAKE IT LEGAL, you can support the Peace Tax Fund Bill that would allow persons opposed to war as a matter

of conscience to redirect the military portion of their federal taxes to peace-promoting activities.

For more information write to:  
NATION CAMPAIGN FOR A PEACE TAX FUND

2121 Decatur Place N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20008

Write now. Our congressmen need to know our wishes. Let us promote the Gospel message of justice and Peace.

Elsie Stabel  
East William Street  
Bath

## Catholic Courier Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* 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: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.