

Church 'cashes out' canonization process

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated Columnist

Two of the most basic sets of questions in theology have to do with sanctity and sinfulness.

What is holiness? Who is a saint?
What is sin? Who is a sinner?

In attempting answers to such questions, we reveal what we really think of ourselves as human beings, and of the life of grace bestowed on us through Jesus Christ.

Take the matter of human sexuality as a case in point. Is sexual intimacy as expressed in marriage an integral, God-given di-

mension of human existence, or is it simply a necessary evil for the sake of human reproduction?

Even great figures from the church's past like Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine regarded the sexual impulse as a cause for shame, and moral theology textbooks, still in use as recently as a couple of decades ago, continued to refer to the genital organs as indecent and dishonorable (*partes inhonestae in the Latin*).

This kind of thinking is generally rejected today, but its spirit lingers on in many of the churches.

There are Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike, whose list of serious sins is still dominated by moral transgressions related to human sexuality and human reproduction: homosexuality, pre-marital sex, birth control, abortion, masturbation, pornography, sterilization, *in vitro* fertilization, and surrogate motherhood.

They regard the church's and the Bible's teaching on these issues to be clear, absolute, and non-negotiable, i.e., not subject to any exception or compromise.

Theologians and other church leaders who step "out of line" on any one or more

ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

of these topics deserve whatever punishment they receive, even banishment for life from the practice of their academic or pastoral vocation within the church.

What doesn't usually show up on such lists of sins — at least not in great quantity — are those moral transgressions having to do with injustice, violence, greed, self-righteousness, bigotry, vindictiveness, and the like.

For such Christians, the church's and the Bible's strictures on matters sexual are unmistakably clear and binding, admitting no variation in degree (*parvitas materiae*, the old Latin textbooks called it), while the church's and the Bible's teachings about these other moral issues are subject to all sorts of qualifications and exceptions.

This difference in understanding the nature of sanctity and sinfulness is "cashed out" in the canonization process. (The word "canon" means "list." To canonize someone is to add him or her to the official "list" of saints.)

No matter what else we say as a church, if the vast majority of people we canonize as saints are priests, nuns, single lay persons, or widows who later founded their own religious order, we're telling our fellow Catholics and the rest of the world that the surest way to sanctity is through sexual abstinence.

The church also says something important to the world when it fails to canonize other types of Catholics: married men and women who didn't happen to enter a convent or seminary upon the death of their spouse, but whose whole life was one of heroic sacrifice for their families, friends, associates, and the wider human community.

The readers of this column could supply hundreds of candidates for sainthood on this criterion alone: mothers and fathers, grandparents, siblings, relatives, friends, acquaintances.

Their nominees might never have founded a religious order nor lived a life of sexual abstinence. On the contrary, their lives may have been fired with a sexual passion that was inspired and sustained by their profound love for another human being.

If we insist nonetheless on canonizing mostly priests and nuns, then why not someone whose sanctity is rooted in a courageous commitment to justice rather than in the mere avoidance of intimate human contact.

Why not someone like Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of El Salvador?

King David's son chooses wisdom to rule Israel

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

Just outside the king's court, a huge crowd of people waited to present their disputes. They came seeking justice in their claims, and the outcome depended on the king's ruling in their cases.

This was the very first time King Solomon would be presiding. It was a big responsibility and he paused to reflect on his dream.

"What would you like for me to give you?" the Lord asked him.

"My father, King David, was a good king for your people, Lord," Solomon replied. "I am young and inexperienced. Please give me a wise and understanding heart so that I can rule with justice."

"You could have asked for anything, Solomon — great wealth, a long life, or victory over your enemies," the Lord answered. "Any of these things I would have given to you. Because you have asked for wisdom, not only will I give you a more discerning heart than any ruler before you,



but I will bestow on you great wealth and honor. If you obey my commandments, I will give you a long life."

King Solomon motioned for one of his officials. "I am ready to begin the proceedings. Bring the people in."

"Your Majesty, the first case concerns two women and a baby," the official said.

"Tell them to come forward now," King Solomon replied.

"Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house," one of them began. "Never did I realize that she was capable of such cruelty!"

"That's not true!" the other woman shouted back. "She is the one who has committed a great crime against me!"

King Solomon called for order. "Please

continue your story," he said to the first woman.

"We both had babies at about the same time," she said. "Each of us had a son born to us. One night, while she slept, she accidentally rolled over on her child and smothered him. Before I awoke, she took her own dead son and placed him beside me. Then she took my baby and tried to pretend that it was hers. Don't you think I know my own child?"

"She lies! The living baby is mine! Her child died!" the other woman screamed.

"Silence!" King Solomon said, interrupting the outburst.

"Since both of you claim to be the baby's mother, there is only one fair method to settle your dispute," he said. Turning to his aid, he ordered, "Bring me a sword."

When he returned with it, King Solomon commanded, "Divide the child in two. Give half of the baby to each of them."

"No, stop!" the first woman pleaded. "It would be far better to let her have my baby than to see him killed."

"Put the sword away," King Solomon said, rising to face the crowd. "I will give the baby to the woman who was willing to give him up to save his life. She has proven by her love to be the real mother."

Scripture reference: 1 Kings, Chapter 3.

MONROE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT FLU SHOT CLINICS

FREE FOR:

- PEOPLE OVER 65 YEARS OF AGE
- PEOPLE OF ANY AGE WITH DIABETES, HEART, LUNG, OR OTHER SERIOUS CHRONIC DISEASES
- PEOPLE WHO TAKE CARE OF, OR LIVE WITH, PEOPLE AT HIGH RISK
- CHILDREN ON LONG TERM ASPIRIN THERAPY
- PEOPLE WHO ARE HIV POSITIVE

Fri., Oct. 20 9-5 p.m.
Penfield Community Center
1985 Baird Rd.
Penfield, N.Y. 14526

Mon., Oct. 23 9-12 noon
Brockport Free Methodist Church
6747 Fourth Section Rd.
Brockport, N.Y. 14420

Mon., Oct. 23 2-5 p.m.
Jas. Wadsworth Army
Rsrve.
2035 Goodman St. North
Rochester, N.Y. 14609

Tues., Oct. 24 9-5 p.m.
Midtown Plaza - 1st Floor
Main St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14614

Thurs., Oct. 26 9-5 p.m.
Webster Parks/Comm.
Service
985 Ebner Dr.
Webster, N.Y. 14580

Fri., Oct. 27 9-5 p.m.
Trinity Emm. Luth. Church
761 Elmgrove Rd.
Rochester, N.Y. 14624

Mon., Oct. 30 9-5 p.m.
Wesley Methodist Church
2009 Dewey Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14615

Tues., Oct. 31 9-12 noon
Henrietta Town Hall
475 Calkins Rd.
Rochester, N.Y. 14623

Tues., Oct. 31 2-5 p.m.
Church of the Master
3495 Lake Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14612

Wed., Nov. 1 9-5 p.m.
Penfield Community Ctr.
1985 Baird Rd.
Penfield, N.Y. 14526

Thurs., Nov. 2 9-5 p.m.
Irondequoit Sr. Citizen Ctr.
154 Pinegrove Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14617

* BRING YOUR MEDICARE CARD

** Flu Vaccine will not be given to people with a fever, Chicken Egg Allergy, past history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, women in the first 3 months of pregnancy, and children less than 6 months old.

**CALL 473-SHOT(7468) FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
BE FLU-WISE... IMMUNIZE!**

Demonstration project jointly supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the Health Care Financing Administration.

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Why should I consult my family about my funeral plans?

Funerals are for the living! Many times plans made without family consultations will leave family members unhappy and dissatisfied. Telling close family members that you will like to have a serious discussion about your plans for your funeral and inviting them to help with the arrangements assures they understand your desires. It will also offer them an opportunity to tell you what they would prefer. Planning a funeral ahead of time is helpful. Don't neglect to take into consideration the wishes of those who will live after you. They are the ones who will benefit or suffer from the choice you make.

We purchase all forms of insurance to protect our family & assets, not because we expect the worst to happen, but to be prepared. Doesn't it make sense then to prepare for what will happen. Let our trained counselors assist you with the many options available in planning for a worry-free future.

Burial Cremation Entombment

**SCHAUMAN-SULEWSKI
FUNERAL HOME**

2100 St. Paul St. 342-3400

EXPERIENCE CLOUD 9...

CLASSIC WALKERS
P.W. MINOR & SON, INC.



It's like walking on air because
EXTRA DEPTH® means more.

More Comfort. More Support.
More Flexibility.

And, available in a full range of
men's and women's sizes,
widths, styles and colors.

**LOTEPIO
SHOE STORE**

Rochester's Only Eastside Orthopedic Shoe Store
790 Ridge Rd., Webster • 671-8289
Mon. Tues. Wed. 9-6 Fri. 9-6 Thurs. 9-8 Sat. 9-5