

1990 could mark another year of surprises

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated Columnist

Oh, how I wish now that I had had the courage to publish the column I had sketched out last January, so filled with astonishingly prescient predictions for 1989.

I predicted that Poland would have democratic elections for Parliament, that Solidarity candidates would win overwhelmingly, and that by the end of summer, one of Solidarity's own leaders would become prime minister.

I predicted that Hungary would cut open its barbed-wire borders to Austria to allow fleeing East Germans to escape to the West, and that it would sever its own long-standing constitutional ties with communism.

I predicted that the Berlin Wall would come tumbling down before Thanksgiving, that street protests by hundreds of thousands of East Germans would bring about the complete collapse of the communist government and the selection of a non-

Communist interim president, and that several of the country's top party officials would be arrested for crimes against the people.

I predicted that a vast human rights movement, led largely by students, would come within an inch of toppling the government of the People's Republic of China, but that the movement would be brutally crushed by guns and tanks.

I predicted, finally, that Mikhail Gorbachev would have a lengthy and fruitful audience with Pope John Paul II and would publicly commit himself to the restoration of all religious rights in the Soviet Union.

Now you can see why I feel so badly about sending a column like that to instant oblivion.

Well, I don't intend to make the same mistake this year. I have some daring predictions about the church for 1990, and I'm not going to let them disappear.

I predict that in 1990 Pope John Paul II will finally grant Hans Kueng's longstand-

ing request for an audience and will restore his canonical right to teach Catholic theology.

I predict that The Catholic University of America, in response to massive candlelight processions by faculty and students, will declare itself institutionally independent of the Holy See and publicly ask Charles Curran for forgiveness — after fully reinstating him to the faculty of theology.

I predict that Seattle's Archbishop Hunthausen will be named a cardinal, and that the pope will personally apologize to him for all the trouble he was made to endure.

I predict that several high-ranking archbishops appointed by Pope John Paul II will voluntarily resign, urging the Holy Father to appoint men more pastorally suited for their dioceses.

I predict that Cardinal Ratzinger will volunteer for a missionary assignment in Africa, following a papal announcement that the Congregation for the Doctrine of



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

the Faith (formerly the Inquisition) would be disbanded forever.

I predict that the rule of celibacy for priests in the Latin rite will be terminated, that resigned priests will be welcomed back to the ministry, and that preparations for the eventual ordination of women will begin.

I predict that the four churchwomen, Archbishop Romero, and the six Jesuits murdered in El Salvador since 1980 will be declared martyrs of the Church and canonized.

May 1990 be for the Catholic Church what 1989 was for Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and even the Soviet Union.

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