

'Orthodox' article failed to dispel stereotypes

To the editor:

Teresa Parsons, in "Orthodox claim short shrift from diocese" (CC: April 12), cited my family's search for an orthodox parish to illustrate the difficulty in finding such a parish in the Rochester Diocese. "The Aquila family, like many on the extreme right," she wrote, "has passed through several parishes in the past five years." (My emphasis). The main point of this sentence is accurate, but the association between my family and "the extreme right" is either purposely dishonest or careless and sloppy. In the second of two interviews with Ms. Parsons I emphasized my activities toward staking out common ground between orthodox and dissenting positions in the Catholic Church. I told her of my work in the Diocesan Division of Social Ministry in the early 1980s, and my association with forums like *The New Oxford Review* and *Communio* that remain faithful to the Magisterium while engaging those who resist its authority. I told her of my affinity and admiration for Dorothy Day, whose social action proceeded from



The opposite of orthodoxy, one writer asserts, is simply 'heresy.'

solid orthodoxy. Finally, I said that she could advance understanding in the Church if she smashed the hackneyed view (promulgated by Father Richard McBrien) that Orthodox Catholics are also conservative Republicans. In short, it was a serious

misunderstanding to assign my resumé to "the extreme right."

But even more fundamental, the application of political categories — like the "extreme right," to life in the Catholic Church reflects a profound ignorance of the Church and its Tradition. As in modern politics categories like Liberal and Conservative and Left and Right obscure more than they reveal. Ironically these categories were the product of the French Revolution, which was wholly antagonistic to Catholicism. In the words of writer Christopher Derrick, "In faith and morals the only useful dichotomy is that between the 'orthodox' and the more or less 'heretical.'" The latter grates on modern ears, tainted by the historical cruelty of Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims. But the Greek root of the word means "selectivity" or "picking and choosing" behavior that accurately describes many modern "cafeteria Catholics."

If the editors and writers of the *Courier* are serious about advancing understanding, they themselves must first crawl out from

under their easy and shallow conceptions of Catholic individuals and organizations. They must use words, the primary medium of their craft and vocation, with great care and precision, correcting not sustaining false and inappropriate distinctions like Left and Right. They must jettison hearsay in favor of honestly interpreted evidence. And they must have a grasp on the whole 2,000 years of Catholic Tradition. The Second Vatican Council, after all, was an extension, not a rejection, of this Tradition.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We agree that the terms "left" and "right" and "liberal" and "conservative" are not ideal for classifying religious convictions, and we will continue searching for more apt descriptions. However, Mr. Aquila's choice of the term "heretical" to describe Catholics whose views he does not accept leaves little room for staking out the common ground he says he seeks.

Reader praises McBrien column, courageous coverage

To the editor:

Thank you, thank you, thank you — for printing Father Richard McBrien's column, "Essays on Theology!" And thank God for Father McBrien and his gift of being able to see more than one aspect of the truth! I especially appreciate today's column (CC: April 19) by Father McBrien because it beamed light on puzzling questions, thoughts and feelings that I had when I was a student in parochial school (for 12 years).

I often found myself back then, feeling as if I really didn't belong, even though I was involved in so many different facets of church life, including going to daily Mass,

singing in the choir ..., cleaning the altars in church, folding the weekly church newspaper on Saturday mornings, dusting the chairs in the church hall on Tuesday afternoons in preparation for the bingo game, at which I also sold lapboards and specials ... Unfortunately, it was also the era during which we were not allowed to question what we were being taught. We more or less had to accept it with a "blind faith."

Nevertheless, many questions still arose within me from time to time, which I found myself pondering and wondering if I'd ever have any answers to. I learned to live

the questions, so to speak, hoping that perhaps in time, and with age, answers might come. Years later, married and with a family, along came the Second Vatican Council, and I was overwhelmed with the generosity of God's Holy Spirit so manifest in the participants and documents — which revealed such a fuller vision of God's Love for humankind and for the church. Joy flooded my whole being even just reading about it in the newspaper then; and also years after the close of the Council when reading the documents, as one by one, my many old questions that I had not been allowed to ask as a child and a teen were being answered! I thanked God for allowing me to live to see this day; I finally felt included and reborn! Praise God!

basis in the Alcohol Rehab Unit, New Horizons Program in one of our local hospitals, and I have asked myself the very same questions as Paula Dumont posed in her article "Help for healing families renews the church." She said it like it is. I ask when will church structures change to reflect living reality? Two years ago I heard that the percentage of existent non-dysfunctional families in this country was 4 percent. I look at that and say the implications for ministry are ongoing, but our current structures and understanding of ourselves as church have to change and grow.

I hope you'll pardon the pun, but I see the kingdom of God as being far more compassionate and democratic than any vague kingdom model of government/structure. I don't relate to living in a "kingdom" and the reign/rule of God in me or in others does not reflect a monarchical type concept to me. A God who could become small enough to live in a helpless infant and an inanimate host is just not the type of monarch a worldly kingdom images for me. ... With all that is in me, I thank you once again for the great job you are doing. It takes courage to print what you do throughout the *Courier*, and I pray that yours increases with each passing day.

Patti Federowicz
Apalachin

'Lumen Gentium' defined dissent

To the editor:

Reference is made to Father Robert L. Collins' opinion in the April 5 *Catholic Courier* regarding "freedom to disagree." I believe that Father Collins takes too simplistic an approach concerning non-infallible Vatican pronouncements. It is best that we first line ourselves up with the following words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council: "This religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. That is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, and the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will here may be known chiefly either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking" (Lumen Gentium 25).

Also, in speaking of "religious assent" on page 218 in "The Teaching of Christ" by Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., Donald

W. Wuerl and Thomas Comerford Lawler, they say: "The confidence is placed not in men, but in Christ, whose care constantly guards the Church. Saints and scholars of all centuries in the Church have affirmed the importance of this heeding of Christ in His Church. And they have regularly proclaimed that this is fully in accord with the highest intellectual integrity as well as with the duties of personal faith, and that it liberates rather than binds the spirit of those who love Christ."

"Those who instruct others in the faith must be careful to teach the authentic message of the Church. For the Catholic there should never be any doubt about what the Church teaches. The Catholic deserves as a teacher a priest who is in accord with his bishop, and a bishop who is in unity of faith with the college of bishops and with the pope."

My prayers for earnest discernment in authentic teaching for all Catholics. Thank you.

Clara Pasto
Corning

After reading Father McBrien's column today, I understand that back when I was a student, the church was emphasizing only one aspect of the truth, the one the teachers gave us then. Truly we are the people of God, all of us — laity, clergy and religious. And ALL are responsible for the church's mission — the one mission of the Lord Jesus Christ ...

I also want to compliment you on the two articles on addiction; I found them to be so right-on! What an incredibly different world this could be if everyone were trying to live the 12 Steps! I work on a per diem

Priest relegates McBrien column to bird cage

To the editor:

Fr. McBrien's column in the April 5 issue is only another example of the garbage he peddles for a profit.

Fr. McBrien calls the statement "error has no rights" a theory, which it is not. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free." Cardinal Ottaviani, one of the greatest churchmen of this century (who was affectionately called "il Capo" by Pope Paul VI) was carrying out his duties as Prefect of the Holy Office in the application of this divine principle. His Eminence did not attempt to compromise the truth, as

Fr. McBrien seems to be in favor of doing.

If the converse of the statement "error has no rights" is acceptable to Fr. McBrien, as he seems to indicate, then is he telling his readers the truth? Is he even attempting to tell them the truth?

I'll stick with Cardinal Ottaviani, thank you. He served Truth well and sought to defend and propagate it. As for Fr. McBrien's sneering sleaze, it will again be relegated to the bottom of my bird cage (with all due respect to my bird).

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