

# Feature story reaps more supportive letters

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

More letters this week in response to a feature article on me in the *Chicago Tribune* in July.

They are reproduced here for the sake of the many readers who also believe that one can be, at the same time, a good Catholic and critical of its governing policies and leaders.

From a bank president in northern Indiana: "I admire your strong stance. I encourage you to 'stay the course.' I also love the Church. It's a part of my life that is very meaningful to me. I can't even think of life without it. However, I do not

believe we're getting the proper leadership. Americans are too well-educated and knowledgeable. We won't react to threats except to turn them off."

From a 42-year-old mother of two in Evanston, Ill.: "I need to say thank you for being a voice that so desperately needs to be heard. Thank you for saying what many Catholics feel but cannot or will not speak out, myself included.

"I am frightened and saddened by the changes that are occurring in the Church today. In my own parish, dissent of any kind is discouraged and constant pressure to toe the party line is the norm. It is scary to be afraid to speak your mind, for fear of

who might hear you.

"The article about you was like a breath of fresh air blowing my way. That is why I had to write, to let you know that I am one of those many, many people who need to know that there are still priests like you in the Church who will speak out for moderation and common sense."

From a 1981 graduate of Notre Dame Law School now practicing in Chicago: "You hit the nail on the head when you spoke of a Church whose leaders seem more and more removed from the existence of ordinary Catholics like me.

"And yet I cannot and will not forsake my Catholic heritage. At the root is my need to partake in the sacraments and to



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experience and give witness to my faith in community ...

"It is because of people like you who have the strength of conviction and who daily share with others their profound love for God that I have confidence that the Catholic Church will not become irrelevant. How can it be otherwise? After all, it was out of the incarnate love of Christ that the Church came to be."

From a mother in Kokomo, Ind.: "We are encouraged by your positions and your reasoning behind those positions. As a female follower of Christ, I have felt a second-class citizenship as far back as I can remember. My 10-year-old daughter asks the same questions as I did at her age. Why can only boys be servers? Why can only men be priests?"

"Recently our parish priest gave a vocation-to-the-priesthood sermon and (my daughter) whispered to me that there would be plenty of priests if they would just let girls do the job."

From a mother of eight children in Maumee, Ohio: "Your positions are so logical, loving, and reassuring, that it gives me hope for the future of the Church. I, too, have felt the abandonment of the hierarchy of the Church in coming to terms with the fact that half of their constituency is female. I have watched female friends' anger have a negative effect on the faith of their children.

"My own position with my eight children has been to reaffirm the teaching of the Church, while not necessarily agreeing with its authoritarian methods ... I still love the Church and its rich traditions. Please continue, for those of us who feel that way, to fight the good fight."

From a professor at Valparaiso University in Indiana: "I found real comfort that there are still voices of reason and wisdom and courage to be heard coming from the Church. I wholeheartedly support your position ... on celibacy for priests and, as a father of two daughters, I endorse your statements on the Church's miserable positions related to women.

"I was recently in conversation with two of my colleagues here, one a theologian, and we were talking about the current brand of schizophrenia afflicting the Church, the Jekyll and Hyde act of dictator/liberator. Thanks for trying to find some middle ground."

And from a 74-year-old man in Evansville, Ind.: "The Church has a wonderful opportunity to step in and try to bring some common sense to the reality of present-day life. It is not what it was before. To try to bring back the good old days is an exercise in futility.

"I'm glad the *Chicago Tribune* printed that article. It gave me some hope there are new winds blowing toward religious relevancy."

Hope. That's the key word. We can't afford to lose it.

# Esther ends Haman's plot and saves her people

By Cindy Bassett  
Courier columnist

"Haman, this is no time to be sleeping!" his wife Zeresh cried as she shook him. "King Xerxes has sent his officials to bring you to Queen Esther's banquet."

Haman bolted like a streak of lightning from his bed. What was happening to him? His mind went back to today's events. He had been forced to lead his hated enemy, Mordecai, through the city streets on the king's own horse. He cringed at the utter humiliation he felt at bringing honor to someone who had refused to respectfully kneel to him as the king's chief minister.

Soon Haman would have his revenge against Mordecai. On the 13th day of the 12th month, every Jew, including Mordecai, would be eliminated. Haman had written the law himself.

Now he was looking forward to Queen Esther's banquet. By the time Haman had reached the palace, his mood had brightened considerably. He failed to notice that all through dinner, Queen Esther regarded



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him with total disdain.

"A most delicious meal," Haman said to the queen after they had finished.

"Speaking of which, dear," King Xerxes looked over at his wife. "You promised that tonight you would reveal the nature of your request. I will grant any petition, even up to half of my kingdom. Now tell us what it is that you seek."

Queen Esther cleared her throat. Haman thought it was strange that the queen kept looking at him while she was speaking to her husband.

"My king, you know what I would never bother you for a trivial matter. This concern is indeed a matter of life and death — my own life and death!"

The king nearly choked with shock and grief. He had waited so long to find a wife so dear. It was unthinkable to lose Queen Esther!

"Please, dear Esther, tell me quickly," the king cried. "I cannot bear it!"

"A cruel law has been written with your own signet ring," she replied. "This law permits the annihilation of an entire people

in your kingdom — my people!"

This time it was Haman who nearly choked. "Your people," he gulped.

"Who would do such a terrible thing," King Xerxes asked.

"Your own chief minister, the vile Haman," Queen Esther said as she stood and pointed her finger at Haman.

King Xerxes was so enraged that he stomped from the room. Haman was on his knees immediately, begging the queen for mercy.

"Leave her alone, you horrible creature!" King Xerxes shouted as he returned a few minutes later followed by one of his officials. "I have heard even more shocking news about my former chief minister! Haman has erected a 75-foot gallows in the city square for the purpose of hanging Mordecai!"

"My own uncle!" Queen Esther gasped.

"Today Haman will hang on his own gallows!" the king ordered. "Get him out of my sight!"

When it was finished, Haman's entire estate had been given over to Queen Esther. She appointed Mordecai to oversee it.

King Xerxes gave his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, to Mordecai.

Mordecai wrote another another law, reversing the one issued by Haman.

Today the Jews still celebrate a holiday to commemorate their deliverance. It is called Purim, because Haman cast a "lot" or the "pur" to first determine the day for their death.

Scripture reference: Book of Esther, Chapters 7-9.

Meditation: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." (Romans 8:28).

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