

The church must practice what it preaches

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

In its document, "Justice in the World," the Third International Synod of Bishops (1971) declared: "While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, it recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes."

This is one of the most important statements to appear in an official church document. It draws upon the recently reclaimed principle of sacramentality; namely, that the church, like any sacrament, must signify externally what it is internally.

The church is the Body of Christ. The principle of sacramentality requires that the church also appear to be the Body of Christ.

The church is the people of God. The principle of sacramentality requires that the church also appear to be the people of God.

The church is the temple of the Holy

Spirit. The principle of sacramentality requires that the church also appear to be the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The social teachings of the church promote justice and human rights for nations, peoples and individuals throughout the world. The principle of sacramentality requires that the church itself also appear to be a community which promotes justice and human rights within its own household.

In other words, the principle of sacramentality requires that the church practice what it preaches.

In political terms, the principle of sacramentality requires that the church's domestic policy be consistent with its foreign policy.

We cannot defend the right of workers outside the church to unionize, while denying the right of workers inside the church to unionize.

We cannot deplore the silencing of dissident voices in authoritarian countries, while denying the same right of public

criticism within the church itself.

We justly celebrate, and indeed marvel at, the extraordinary political rehabilitation of Vaclav Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia; of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the new prime minister of Poland; and of Nelson Mandela, the new deputy president of the African National Congress.

Each of these men had been imprisoned, not for crimes of violence or theft, but simply for having criticized and opposed their governments.

Their counterparts in the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church had names like John Courtney Murray, SJ; Yves Congar, OP; and Marie-Joseph LaGrange, OP.

All three were rehabilitated by Vatican II. The first two served as *periti*, or experts, at the council, while the third had his pioneering work in biblical studies confirmed by the landmark Constitution on Divine Revelation (a document anticipated in 1943 by Pope Pius XII's encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*).

But there are also present-day counter-



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

parts of Havel, Mazowiecki and Mandela. They have names like Hans Kung, Charles Curran, and Leonardo Boff, OFM.

These three theologians have not yet been rehabilitated, but if history is a reliable guide, they eventually will be — in some future pontificate.

More and more, observers outside the church are calling attention to the discrepancy between the church's foreign and domestic policies.

On the occasion of Pope John Paul II's 70th birthday this past May, an editorial in *The Irish Independent* measured the pope's extraordinary contribution to the collapse of Communism in eastern Europe against his resistance to calls for reform within the church.

According to *The Irish Independent*, "The Polish Church has helped to teach not only Poland, but the rest of eastern Europe, how to overthrow the official ideology; how, in the pope's words, to be mature nonconformists."

"But after any revolution," the editorial continued, "comes the harder, duller task of creating new forms of government, less oppressive than the old. It is improbable that the liberated nations will look so eagerly to the church for inspiration and guidance in this second project."

The editorial wisely conjectures that Pope John Paul II is profoundly worried now about the second phase of the anti-Communist revolution.

"From the pope's point of view, the danger is that in adopting western political and economic ideas, eastern Catholics will also become less obedient in their religious life," the editorial said.

The *Independent* had begun its editorial with a brief quotation from Psalm 90, in which a person's life after the age of 70 is said to be marked by "labour and sorrow."

The editorial ended on that note: "If the next 10 years are not, as the psalmist warned, to prove 'but labour and sorrow' to John Paul II, he will have to tolerate inside the church a degree of mature nonconformity which he himself will detest."

Domestic policy has to mesh with foreign policy. Practice has to be consistent with preaching. The principle of sacramentality has to prevail.

Jesus teaches God loves best gifts from the heart

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

After listening to Jesus preach one day, my brother Peter and I went with him and some of the others to the temple in Jerusalem. All of us sat together on the bench across from the collection boxes.

It was a busy place. This is where people came to drop their coins to help pay the temple expenses.

A steady stream of people paraded before us. As we looked on, a little drama seemed to be taking place.

"Look over there Andrew," Peter said as he nudged me. "That's Samuel and he's a very successful lawyer. He's probably got a large offering to give today."

Samuel walked over to the collection



THE BIBLE CORNER

box. Other people turned to look as Samuel dropped the gold coins in one by one. When he finished, Samuel turned and walked away with a great deal of satisfaction.

"He's done well for himself," I told Peter.

"Do you know who that is?" Peter asked, pointing to a well-dressed man who was approaching.

"That's Silas," I whispered. "He has as

much land as the entire city of Jerusalem. His house overlooks a vineyard that he owns."

Silas dropped in so many coins that one of the priests even walked over to thank him after he had finished.

"I bet his offering was the largest one today," Peter said.

Next we saw an old woman coming toward the collection box. Her clothes were shabby. She seemed very uncomfortable about something and didn't even look up. She quickly dropped in two copper coins before she scurried away.

"Not even a penny's worth," I chuckled to Peter.

But it was Jesus, not Peter, who answered me this time. "That poor woman gave more than anyone else here today," He said.

My face flushed with embarrassment. I was speechless when I realized that Jesus had probably heard all of our comments.

"Lord, is it true that we are just simple fishermen?" Peter said as he found his voice. "Our minds tell us that the others today gave many times over what this woman gave. How can this be?"

Jesus turned to face us all. "You are measuring things by what your eyes can see. My father knows what is in the heart of these givers," He said. "Those who seemed to be generous today gave from their surplus. First they kept the best for themselves."

"On the other hand, this poor woman gave from what she had to live on," He continued. "Her gift meant a sacrifice to herself. And so it was the greatest gift of all. Now do you understand?"

Scripture reference: Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4. Meditation: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Communities to celebrate opening of parish schools

ROCHESTER — Parish and school communities in the Northeast Quadrant will sponsor "A Gathering of Friends" on Sunday, Sept. 30, to celebrate the opening of the quadrant's seven Catholic schools. The theme of the celebration will be "In the City of God, we are not strangers, but friends who have never met."

The event marks the second consecutive year in which Catholic schools in the region have operated under a quadrant system.

The celebration will take place at Nor-

theastern Catholic Junior High, 125 Kings Highway S. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preside at the 2 p.m. opening prayer service, which will be followed by a picnic.

Every parish and school in the quadrant has been invited to bring a banner for inclusion in the procession. Each family is also welcome to bring its own picnic lunch.

All residents of the Northeast Quadrant of Monroe County are welcome to attend the event, regardless of whether they have children in Catholic school.

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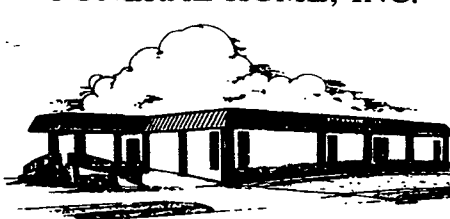
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Correction

Two errors were contained in Father Richard P. McBrien's Sept. 6 column, "Scandals signal need for institutional change." With regard to a scandal that took place in Newfoundland, Canada, the column mistakenly identified the resigning archbishop of St. John's as archbishop of Halifax, and referred to the Mount Cashel boys' orphanage as Mount Carmel. The *Catholic Courier* regrets the errors.

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