



Church may avoid schism through excommunication

To the editors:

In his column, Father McBrien recently asked "Why does the Catholic Church single out abortion ... as grounds for excommunication while exempting other forms of unjust killing from the church's supreme penalty?"

The answer seems pretty obvious: no other form of unjust killing is legal and taxpayer-supported in this country.

Does Father McBrien really think there wouldn't be a similar outcry if aggravated rape or child abuse, ending in the death of the victims, were legalized and Catholic politicians waffled or kept their silence?

On the contrary, there'd be an outcry on far lesser grounds. Imagine: Congress decides that churches no longer deserve their current exemptions; so they're saddled with onerous taxes. Imagine the wholesale confiscation of church proper-

ties, by the IRS, for failure to pay those taxes in a timely fashion. Then imagine Catholic politicians who, because they feel "stuck in the middle," counsel a cool head and understanding of the situation's "delicacy."

You'd have *en masse* excommunications of those politicians in a New York minute. It's interesting, in an earlier column Father McBrien took excerpts from a Florida priest, writing in *Our Sunday Visitor*, and showed how they were heretical. As a theologian, though, Father McBrien knows that there isn't one of us who doesn't hold opinions or concepts which, taken to their logical conclusion, would be "heretical."

True heresy, though, is the formal teaching of erroneous beliefs which go against those held by the group to which one belongs — and the heretic must teach them in the face of repeated appeals to desist.

Surely, Catholic politicians' insistence on taking a pro-choice position reflects a formal break with the pastoral, if not the dogmatic, teachings of the church.

The church, no doubt with good reason, does not bandy about words like heretic, apostate, or schismatic in the twentieth century. Yet, abortion is an extremely volatile and divisive issue; and pro-choice Catholics — especially pro-choice Catholic politicians — may eventually effect a *de facto*, if not a *de jure*, schism within the church.

If that happens, it will be as difficult to heal as the separation of any of our other brethren; maybe more so.

Threat of excommunication might prevent passions from taking us that far. It might also persuade certain politicians to save innocent unborn lives.

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'Forced celibacy counters God's values'

To the editors:

Many good points were made in the Courier's Sept. 13 edition concerning the problems surrounding the celibacy issue. One such point, presented on the front page headline dealt with the fact that "celibacy counters society's values." While this is true, I will dare to take it one step further and say, more importantly, that forced celibacy counters God's values.

We know that Jesus did *not* demand celibacy from his disciples so who are we or our church leaders to demand it from anyone? Did He not say that it was a *gift* and that those specifically who were *enabled* — by grace and for God's specific purpose — should accept it? He never says that all his disciples would receive this endowment. Obviously, they don't.

Neither did God demand celibacy in Old Testament times. The rabbis who served Him were allowed, even expected, to marry.

Procreation, we know, is an important part of God's plan as is the love, intimacy and mutual support which flows from a holy marriage of God's followers. It complements and foreshadows the relationship we have and will have with Him. In a good marriage, we can experience his love more deeply than in any other human way. In God, the two truly become one.

Let us remember that God made Adam and Eve, and He says that it is not good for

man to be alone.

For generations, our Catholic church has been weakened by the hierarchy of celibate leaders. Doesn't it stand to reason that strong Christian leaders having strong Christian families will be an inspiration and example to other families? And, do you really believe that a celibate priest is the best person to minister to families in need? He may be better than a less spiritual person but not as competent as a married spiritual priest or person.

It is actually the very nature of the single male hierarchy that has caused the imbalance in our church: the concept that priests should do all the work — because they have no personal commitments — and the rest of the people don't have to preach, teach or spread the Gospel. Today we find in our Protestant churches in general more of a commitment to community and personal responsibility for evangelization. Now that the lay people are being forced to take on more responsibility, we will see more of a sense of this community develop within our church as well as people fulfilling their call to evangelize. Does the Lord not call all his people "a holy priesthood?"

For those who would quote some Scripture passage about denying our very selves, let me say this. In Scripture, Jesus is talking to *all* of us. We are all called to let go of our will and to follow God's will. A man who takes an oath of celibacy and

hasn't been given this gift from above cannot expect to receive the grace for this.

Having said all this, I will conclude by saying we need to *love, support and pray* for our priests. They are among the finest, most courageous, most idealistic men who ever walked the face of the earth. They truly want to be the followers of Christ and good leaders that we need. Most of them are, in spite of the pressures and often cruel opposition they have to face. We need to all work on changing the man-made rules that try and deny their God-given rights. Christian priests, deacons, leaders and lay people must all be given the freedom to marry or remain celibate according to God's plan for them.

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Pro-life groups seek participants for week of prayer to end abortion

To the editors:

A nation-wide network of religious Pro-Life groups is proposing that *all* God-fearing Americans of goodwill unite in an entire week of prayer and fasting, commencing on October 7, 1990, the feast of the Most Holy Rosary, in an intense effort to end the tragedy of abortion and to bring our country to a conversion of heart.

The main enemy we must contend with is not a foreign nation, not a political power. As St. Paul expressed it, "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high." Then he went on to explain the need of spiritual weapons.

Our Lord also emphasized the impor-

ance of weapons of the spirit. On one occasion His disciples were unable to cast out a certain demon. "This kind," He said, "can be cast out only by prayer and fasting." Fasting here can mean renunciation of anything man craves, e.g., TV. This week of fast ends on October 13, 1990, the anniversary of the miracle of the sun at Fatima.

Let us all religions trust in Her power of intercession for the world by using the weapons she has asked — prayer/especially the Rosary — and fasting. In this way, Our Lady will lead in this conflict, bringing an end to Satan's reign in undoing his hold on the world.

Joanne Leahy
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Applauds congregation for work in missions of Selma, Alabama

To the editors:

Warm greetings from the sunny South! We wish to take this opportunity to share with the Rochester community our thanks for all that they have done over these past 50 years in helping to support the Selma Missions.

We had the wonderful privilege of spending the weekend of Sept. 13th through the 16th with the Sisters of St. Joseph in celebrating 50 years in the South. Believe us, we experienced true southern hospitali-

ty! Talk about the red carpet treatment! What a thrill to see Bishop Clark and to have him celebrate with us for the whole weekend. You have every right to be proud of your bishop! No doubt, Bishop Clark will tell you more about the Alabama Missions and the wonderful people living there.

We only wish that you could see the great work the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Fathers of St. Edmond are doing in the Alabama Missions. They continue to live out Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was sick and you comforted me, I was in prison and you visited me."

The changes that these missionaries have wrought in such a short space of time is truly amazing! God has certainly blessed their work. Let us continue our prayers for our brothers and sisters in the Alabama Missions and ask the Lord to bless them during the next 50 years!

Sr. Marie Albert, SSJ
Sue Frank
St. Petersburg, Fla.

Suggests priest form 'McBrienist' religion

To the editors:

All right, Father McBrien, you've made your point. There are a lot of people who think like you do. So start another religion — become another Martin Luther — but for heaven's sake, stop knocking the Roman Catholic religion, please.

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