

# Why was Archbishop May overlooked?

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

Two American archbishops were recently installed as new members of the College of Cardinals: Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia and Roger Mahony of Los Angeles.

Nothing in this column is intended, even indirectly, as a criticism of these individuals. Given the size of their archdioceses and the force of recent tradition, their appointments were entirely expected.

To be sure, both are ecclesiastically "safe." They can be counted upon to provide uncompromising support for Vatican documents, initiatives and policies, even when there is considerable criticism of same by other members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

No unusual inference, therefore, can be drawn from their elevation to the College of Cardinals. Both bishops clearly meet the pastoral norms which this pontificate has consistently followed in selecting bishops and in promoting them to higher office in the church.

What is telling about this latest list of new cardinals is not that Archbishops Bevilacqua and Mahony were on it, but that Archbishop John May of St. Louis, was not.

Archbishop May's three immediate predecessors in St. Louis were all elevated to the College of Cardinals: John Glennon in 1946, Joseph Ritter in 1961, and John Carberry in 1969 (only one year after his appointment as archbishop).

John May became Archbishop of St. Louis in 1980. Since then, there have been at least four consistories at which Americans have been admitted to the College of Cardinals: in 1983 (Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago); in 1985 (Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, and Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston); in 1988 (Cardinal Edmund Szoka of Detroit, and Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C.); and in '91 (Cardinals Bevilacqua and Mahony).

Except for the Bernardin appointment — which had a special rationale, given the awkward situation created by his immediate predecessor — each of the nominations followed the usual pattern of promotions of conservative loyalists.

What is perhaps not generally recognized is that, alongside this explicit effort to promote bishops of a particular type, there is an equally forceful determination to thwart the candidacies of otherwise qualified and deserving candidates simply because they are perceived to be insufficiently conservative and loyal.

Archbishop May is a case in point. He should have been named a cardinal by now. He has been archbishop of St. Louis since 1980; each of his three immediate predecessors was named a cardinal; and there have been at least four opportunities for the pope to have done so since the archbishop first came to St. Louis over a decade ago.

Has the archdiocese of St. Louis shrunk so much in ecclesiastical significance since Cardinal Carberry's elevation in 1969? Is Archbishop May personally unworthy? Has he blotted his copybook somewhere along the line?

As far as one can tell, St. Louis is still a fine archdiocese and Archbishop May has an excellent reputation, not only among his own priests, religious, and lay people, but among his brother bishops as well. Indeed, he was elected president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops only a few years ago and served with distinction.

Archbishop May is no liberal in the media's sense of the word. Few U.S. bishops are liberal. He's more accurately described as a moderate, that is, one who is unmistakably loyal to the Holy See but open at the same time to legitimate change and to respectful dialogue with those who advocate change.



## ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

Characteristically, his welcoming address to the annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, meeting in St. Louis in 1989, was filled with appreciation for the contributions Catholic theologians have made to the church.

"I think the church in the United States," he said, "suffers from too many anxious, warning voices that would divide the bishops against theologians. There are too many sweeping accusations leveled at the theological soundness and creedal fidelity of the theologians. There are too many vague but insistent attacks, telling bishops the theologians will supplant them in their teaching office or ignore their pastoral guidance or lead the people of God into antagonism, division, and virtual schism."

If Archbishops Bevilacqua and Mahony deserved their red hats, so, too, does Archbishop John May and the Archdiocese of St. Louis. And my column, I should say, doesn't even appear in *The St. Louis Review*, the diocesan newspaper.

# Paul and his followers encounter another false god

By Cindy Bassett  
Courier columnist

Demetrius slammed his business records shut and threw them across the room. The steady downward spiral of sales that had begun several months ago continued. It was all the fault of these broad-minded philosophers who had allowed these followers of the Way to preach in Ephesus in the first place.

These philosophers prided themselves on the intellectual exchange of ideas and other world views. It had become more than just a mere exchange of ideas.

Before Demetrius bent to pick up the roster, he paused by the window to survey the streets below. It was still early and the streets were empty of the confusion that had existed yesterday.

It had begun first with the burning of the books. These books, the people proclaimed, contained witchcraft and sorcery and had no place in their lives anymore. They had become followers of Jesus Christ and would no longer worship the goddess, Diana.

The city of Ephesus had become a great tourist center because of Diana. Legend



## THE BIBLE CORNER

had it that her image had fallen to Ephesus from heaven. A huge temple had been erected in her honor and people from all over the world flocked to Ephesus. Every year, Demetrius sold thousands of silver replicas of the temple and Diana to the people who made the pilgrimage here. His shop employed many silver craftsmen to meet this demand.

Yesterday afternoon, an old woman had walked in full view of the crowd and shouted that she no longer believed in the goddess, Diana. That said, this woman had taken the silver statue of Diana and threw it into the raging bonfire.

Her chant was soon picked up by scores of others and before long, dozens of these statues and models of the temple had been

thrown into the fire. All of this had occurred in the center square just across from where Demetrius' shop stood.

Demetrius hadn't even opened the shop at all yesterday because of the great crowd in the city square. He feared these people would come and destroy everything he owned. Instead, he had waited until they finally had dispersed. It was almost dark when Demetrius had gone to gather up the charred remains of some of his own work.

Demetrius turned from the window, his face set firmly. Something had to be done immediately. He was the head of the local silversmith's organization and he would arrange for a meeting of his fellow craftsmen today.

"Gentlemen, I have called you here to discuss a serious threat to not only our own livelihood, but the future existence of our city," Demetrius said. "For many years, Ephesus has been a great tourist center because of the goddess, Diana. Diana has favored us by allowing us to make a living selling our silver replicas."

He continued, "Ever since those followers of the Way and their leader, Paul, have come to Ephesus, our business has de-

teriorated. If we stand idly by, we will all be ruined!"

Before Demetrius even finished his discourse, some of his fellow craftsmen had risen to their feet. One of them shouted, "Great is Diana of Ephesus! Long may she reign in honor here!"

The rest of the crowd took up the chant and they went out into the street and continued yelling: "Great is Diana of Ephesus!"

Soon many of the curious onlookers in the street had taken up their cry and joined them too. The mob moved toward the amphitheater in a great rush.

When the mayor of Ephesus heard all of the commotion, he went before the crowd and called them to order, saying, "Citizens of Ephesus, if Demetrius and his craftsmen have a complaint against these followers of the Way, then go through proper channels and file a formal complaint. These men have done nothing against you. If the Roman government hears about this riot, we will all be called to account for it."

Paul had also heard the great disturbance and he came immediately to the amphitheater. But his followers feared for his life and begged him not to speak.

A few days later, Paul left Ephesus and went back to Jerusalem. He had been in the region for nearly three years and he left behind a great following of Christians and new churches.

Scripture Reference: Acts, Chapter 19:23-41.

Meditation: "Your money will perish with you for thinking that God's gift can be bought." (Acts, 8:20)

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