

# Abortion not only Catholic issue

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

The Administrative Board of the United States Catholic Conference has issued a statement on political responsibility every four years since the 1976 presidential election campaign.

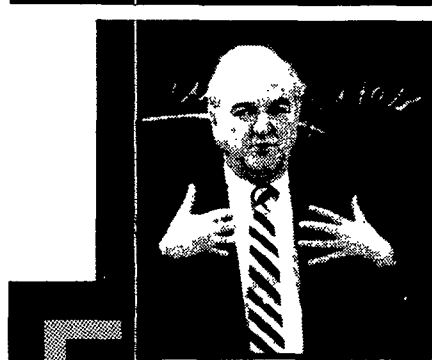
The statements have had a three-fold purpose: "to encourage broad participation in the electoral process, (to) outline the role of the church in public life and (to) raise the moral and human dimensions of key issues for discussion in the coming campaigns" (*Origins*, Oct. 21, 1991 (p.313).

The bishops have always been emphatic about the non-partisan nature of their own involvement: "We bishops specifically do not seek the formation of a religious voting bloc; nor do we wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates."

The words "or opposing" were not part of these quadrennial statements until after the 1984 campaign in which certain prominent bishops had left many people with the distinct impression that they favored the Republican ticket.

How was such an impression created? The only national candidate these bishops criticized by name in 1984 was the Democratic candidate for vice president, Geraldine Ferraro.

The bishops' conference wanted to avoid even the appearance of partisanship in the future so they



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added the words "or opposing" to their statements for the 1988 and 1992 campaigns. Bishops, in other words, are to take care lest anything they say or do regarding specific candidates be interpreted as having partisan political overtones.

Furthermore, candidates are not to be judged on one issue alone: "We hope that voters will examine the positions of candidates on the full range of issues as well as their personal integrity, philosophy and performance."

Indeed, in their 1987 and 1991 statements, the bishops added an explicit endorsement of a position initially proposed by Cardinal Joseph Berrardin of Chicago: "We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the normal framework from which we address all is-

ssues in the political arena. In this consistent ethic of life, we address a spectrum of issues, seeking to protect human life and promote human dignity from the inception of life to its final moment."

Because of the stand taken by the bishops in their 1987 statement, there was a marked improvement in episcopal comportment during the 1988 campaign. But now the pendulum may be swinging back toward the discredited 1984 model.

This year's early battleground seems to have been the Catholic college and university campus. Several bishops have publicly criticized certain Catholic institutions for their choices of commencement speakers and award recipients.

The cardinal-archbishops of New York and Boston, the bishops of Pennsylvania and the local bishop took the University of Notre Dame to task for conferring this year's Laetare Award on New York's Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The local bishop announced he would not attend the graduation exercises lest his presence "be interpreted as an approval of (Moynihan's) position relative to the issue of reborn life."

In Philadelphia the cardinal-archbishop similarly chastised Rosemont College of the Holy Child Jesus for having chosen as its commencement speaker Lynn Yeakel, a pro-choice candidate for the U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania.

And Fordham University has been criticized for inviting Geraldine Ferraro to be the commencement speaker at the Law School.

One shouldn't draw too broad a conclusion from such limited data, but one can perhaps detect a trend: each of the politicians in question is a Democrat, and the only issue involved is abortion.

However, none of the bishops who criticized the Moynihan award at Notre Dame raised even a hint of protest against Notre Dame's choice of President Bush as its commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient.

Bush has publicly campaigned for pro-choice Republican candidates for the U.S. Senate and governorships all across the country, rejected the urgings of the U.S. bishops and Pope John Paul II against entering the Persian Gulf war when he did, introduced the divisive issue of race into the 1988 campaign, and turned his back on the needs of the poor and the jobless in our inner cities — at least until the Los Angeles riots.

Some say that Bush should be exempt from criticism because he's not Catholic. But neither is Yeakel, so why did the local cardinal make an issue of her presence at Rosemont College?

And where did that novel doctrine come from that only fellow Catholics are to be subject to criticism of this sort? Is abortion an exclusively Catholic issue? Whatever happened to the natural law that binds all human beings, without regard for religious affiliation?

For that matter, whatever happened to consistency, as in "the consistent ethic of life"?

# Mystery of the Trinity caused divisions

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 16:12-15; (R1) Proverbs 8:22-31; (R2) Romans 5:1-5.

A customer once asked a clerk in a Buena Park, Calif., store for Hanukkah cards. "We only sell Hallmark," the clerk replied.

After a homily containing a little biblical geography, a parishioner after Mass thanked the priest for enlightening her. "I always thought Dan and Beersheba were husband and wife, just like Sodom and Gomorrah," she said.

We often discover a similar lack of knowledge regarding one of the greatest mysteries of our faith — the Holy Trinity.

The word "trinity" does not occur in the Bible. It means "three in one" — a tri-unity. The Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) focused attention on the Trinity by declaring Jesus' divinity as the Word of God made flesh. "I and the Father are one," Jesus said.

The Council explained this oneness to mean that both possess the same divine nature. The Greek word they used was *homoousion*, meaning the same nature. This sparked more

controversies in the next 50 years than did Vatican II.

Theologians split into two groups: Homoiousians and Hypostaseians. The controversy was known as the Nicene crisis. The Homoiousians maintained that the Persons of the Trinity did not have the same nature, but a like nature. This logically led to Tritheism: three gods.

On the contrary, the Hypostaseians, insisting on the unity of the divine nature, saw only one person (in Greek *hypostasis*) in God: a person who is called "Father" when seen as creator, who is called "Son" when viewed as redeemer; and "Holy Spirit" when seen as sanctifier. This was the heresy of Modalism: one God having three modes of operation.

Into this state of confusion, God raised up the great Cappadocian Fathers: St. Basil; his brother, St. Gregory Nyssa; and their dearest friend, St. Gregory Nazianzus.

The Cappadocians resolved the Trinitarian issue by accepting the *homoousia* (same nature) so dear to the West and the East's three *hypostases* (persons). St. Gregory Nazianzus compressed the whole teaching in his crisp formula: "The Three are

one in their divinity and the One is three in the Persons."

In 381 A.D. the Council of Constantinople was called to settle questions about the Holy Spirit.

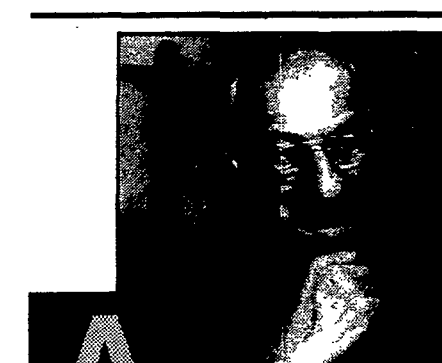
The two St. Gregorys steered the council toward reaffirming the position of the Council of Nicea regarding the divinity of Christ, and moved it a step forward to define the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) put the finishing touches on the doctrine by stating that in the one God there are three Persons, equal and distinct, and possessing the same divine nature.

The Trinity's mystery lies in the processions: how can the Son proceed from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son and all the three still be equal? Therein lies the mystery.

A good analogy for the Trinity is the family, which is one and has but one name. A family, however, has many members or persons: the father (image of the Father); the mother (image of the Holy Spirit); and the children (image of the Son).

So who is God? God is a community of three divine Persons — each unique — yet one by love.



A  
WORD  
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SUNDAY

Man is to image God: he is to be himself and still be social. When he is himself, fully human, then he enriches society, for each of us has something to give that no one else in the world can give. Life's symphony would be diminished without each of us. When he is social, he is enriched because he can love and be loved, share and receive, give and be forgiven. No man is an island. To be one for all and all for one is truly to emulate God.

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