

Things you usually don't see or hear

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

Rarely a week goes by that something familiar doesn't happen in the Catholic Church.

An alleged apparition of the Blessed Mother attracts thousands of onlookers, all hoping to catch sight of her during her next visit.

The president of the United States, who is running for reelection, is photographed with a prominent cardinal.

A lay parish minister, almost always a woman, is fired by a new, more conservative pastor.

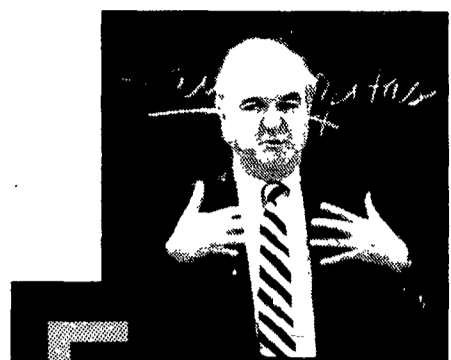
The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith suspends a theologian from his teaching position.

A bishop tells the press that the vocations crisis will be solved by prayer and personal contacts with prospective candidates.

Wouldn't it give many of us a boost if the unfamiliar also happened just once in a while?

For example, someone notices a bit of moisture under the eye of a statue of the Blessed Mother and tells the pastor that Mary is crying for our sins. He gets the word out to the press. And no one shows up. Not one person.

The political advance-team for the president of the United States in-



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

forms the cardinal-archbishop of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles (you name it) that President Bush will be in town and would like to pay a visit. The cardinal's office replies, "Sorry, not until after the election."

During an election year, a major fraternal organization invites all the bishops of the United States to attend its annual convention at which the president will speak. None of the bishops accepts.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issues a carefully

reasoned and meticulously documented critique of a theologian's work to which other theologians are invited to respond. And the congregation doesn't even hint at a penalty or censure of any kind.

A bishop tells the press that the vocations crisis isn't going to improve without a significant reform of the process of recruiting, training, and evaluating candidates. For starters, he says, the church has to prepare for the day, now close at hand, when celibacy will no longer be required and when women will be eligible for ordination.

At a major diocesan banquet, none of those sitting at the headtable with the bishop is making more than \$35,000 a year. And the bishop is photographed giving a check for one of their projects.

A diocesan bishop refuses to sit on the dais with a pro-life Catholic politician who supports capital punishment, opposes gun control, and votes consistently against government programs for the poor.

A community of women religious asks the bishop not to have any priests or other male altar-ministers for a jubilee Mass at their convent, because males cannot properly "image" the women who constitute the community.

An Hispanic bishop publicly ad-

mits that obligatory celibacy is the major reason why there are too few priestly vocations within the Hispanic community — and he calls for a change in the law lest the exodus of Hispanic Catholics to Protestant sects increases.

In order to avoid giving scandal by violating Catholic social teaching, a bishop agrees to bargain collectively with an agent selected by his Catholic school teachers — even though he can't stand the agent.

Forty-five priests attend a funeral Mass and none concelebrates. Instead, they participate fully, in the congregation, as members of God's priestly people.

The pope selects a new bishop from within the ranks of the local diocesan clergy and the appointment is greeted with wide approval by the priests' senate, the diocesan sisters' council, and the diocesan pastoral council — all of whom had placed the new bishop among their top three choices.

Smiling broadly and not a little mischievously, the pope announces that every priest in the world has been named a monsignor — thus, effectively ending, once and for all, an outmoded system of honors for servants of God's people.

Now, now, don't snarl. Smile. Like the pope.

All of us need encouragement at times

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

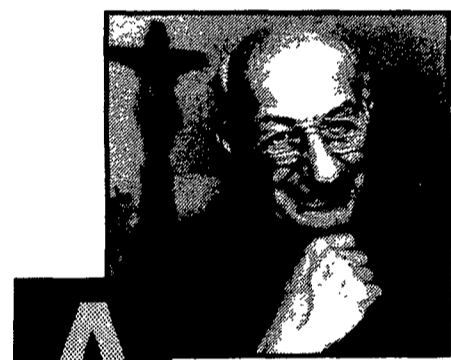
Sunday Readings: (R3) Luke 17:5-10; (R1) Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4; (R2) 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14.

A grammar-school student managed to summarize the life of Socrates in two sentences of a class report: "Socrates was a Greek philosopher who went around giving people good advice. They poisoned him."

The famous philosopher may not have been the only person in history liquidated for dishing out advice, for most people resent receiving it. Advice usually isn't too welcomed, nor is it worth much. As the saying goes, "Free advice doesn't cost anything — unless you take it."

Perhaps a better approach would be to soften the word "advice" to "counsel" and modify it with the adjective "encouraging," or simply use the word "exhortation." Encouraging counsel, or exhortation can be beneficial and positive.

That was the kind of good advice the apostle Paul gave Timothy in the second reading. Timothy is probably the best known of all Paul's fellow believers. They



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

hooked up sometime during Paul's second missionary journey. He became Paul's constant companion.

Once in a while, Paul would leave Timothy behind — as he did in Ephesus — while he went on ahead, in order that Timothy might finish a task begun there or perhaps act as a decoy, to allow Paul the chance to escape imminent danger. During these separations, Paul wrote to Timothy.

His first letter was probably writ-

ten from Macedonia to Timothy at Ephesus; his second was probably written from Rome, where he was serving a prison sentence (A.D. 61-63). Sunday's second reading is a passage from Paul's second letter to Timothy.

Timothy was much younger than Paul. His letter is one of encouraging counsel or exhortation. Paul was in prison in Rome, which might have been a crisis for Timothy. Then there was the ever-present threat of martyrdom, fatigue, the constant attacks on the faith by "gnostics" — all of these considerations were taking their toll on the young Timothy.

The spark was still there, however. Once it was a flame, and it could be so again. The flame was God's gift given to Timothy at ordination. Paul advises his trusted lieutenant "to stir into flame the gift of God bestowed when my hands were laid on you, not to be cowardly, never to be ashamed of the gospel, but to bear your share of the hardships the gospel entails."

Wise words, warning words, warm words. How fortunate the young Timothy was to have a mentor who offered such wisdom. What

a model for all Christians who have young ones under their charge. Not to scold, to nag, to give cold advice, where seldom is heard an encouraging word.

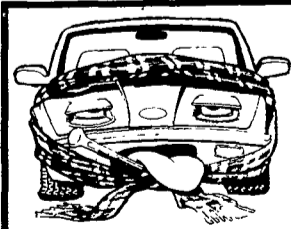
William Arthur Ward said: "Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you."

Bart Starr was the Green Bay Packers' quarterback during their great years under legendary coach Vince Lombardi in the 1960s. One year he made an arrangement with his oldest son to encourage good grades: for every "A" Bart Jr. brought home from school, dad would give him 10 cents. (It was in the 1960s!)

One Sunday the Packers had a particularly bad game in which Starr didn't do well at all. It was a long plane ride home, but as he arrived home and entered his own bedroom, he felt better after seeing a handwritten note from his son. It read: "Dear Dad. I thought you played a great game. Love, Bart." Taped to the note were two dimes.

We all have times when we can use a little encouragement.

AUTOCARE



Let Us Take The Guess Work Out Of Diagnosing Your Car's Problem.

Our excellent service, solid reputation, and quality workmanship keep our customers coming back year-after-year.

Isn't it time you gave us a try too?



Hoselton Chevrolet/Geo
Automotive Maintenance & Repair
586-7373 • 909 Fairport Rd. • E. Rochester

PAUL'S SERVICENTER

AAA Approved • MERCURY TIRES • COMPLETE REPAIRS

735 EMERSON ST., 458-4650

TUNE-UPS • BRAKES • WHEEL ALIGNMENT

MUFFLERS • TIRES • SHOCKS • BATTERIES

Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri 8:30-6:00 Sat 7:30-4:00

A. Paul, Service Pres. Pat Spontis, Mgr.

WINTERIZE FLUSH AND FILL

- Flush Cooling System • Check Radiator Cap
- Check Thermostat • Check System For Leaks
- Add Fresh Coolant & Set For Minus 30°

\$3.00 OFF NOW ONLY \$29.95

With Coupon Expires 11/30/92

SAVE \$4.00

WHEEL ALIGNMENT
(Trucks, Front Wheel Drive & Parts Extra)

NOW ONLY \$28.95

With Coupon Expires 11/30/92