

# Church, baseball have similar troubles

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

Several weeks ago, Marge Schott, owner of the Cincinnati Reds, found herself embroiled in controversy over remarks she allegedly made about African-Americans, Jews and Asians. Although Schott released a carefully crafted statement condemning racial and ethnic bigotry and absolving herself of any such taint, the concerns about her attitude and behavior persisted.

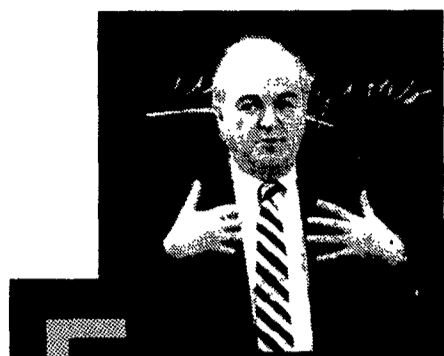
Why? Because her public words are not consistent with her public record.

According to press reports, only one of 45 of Schott's front-office employees is an African-American. If her hiring pattern were different, it might be easier to believe that she didn't make the remarks attributed to her, that she never said, for example, that she'd rather employ a monkey than a black (she allegedly used a different word for "black").

This week's column, however, isn't about racial discrimination in major-league baseball. It's about gender discrimination in the church. But there are parallels.

The U.S. Catholic bishops have contended throughout the prolonged controversy over their defeated pastoral letter on women that "it would be wrong ... to see the exclusion of women from ordination as a denial of the equality of women in the church."

Indeed, the bishops have been very sensitive to such a charge, and have



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taken great pains to refute it. The ordination issue, they insist, in no way diminishes their own high estimation of the dignity and role of women in the church.

As far as the bishops are concerned, Catholic women are equal to Catholic men in all things except the call to ordained priesthood.

What is one to make of such a claim?

As in Schott's case, public words have to be measured against public performance. One has to take a look at the church's own "front office."

Last month Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee did just that in a op-ed piece in Dec. 6, 1992 issue of *The New York Times*.

The archbishop pointed out that

there are many high-level positions in the church; beyond parish and diocesan councils, that non-ordained Catholics, including women, could occupy.

One doesn't have to be ordained or a male to fill one of the top three positions in the 21 Vatican bureaucratic departments: those of prefect, secretary and under-secretary. At present, however, only cardinals, archbishops and monsignors are in those ranks.

The Vatican has formal diplomatic relations with more than 130 countries. All of the diplomats are archbishops and their aides are monsignors. "There is no reason," Archbishop Weakland points out, "why women could not serve in these capacities."

In addition, a whole new group of women has entered the field of theology and biblical studies in recent years. Many of these scholars have already made their mark as writers, teachers and public figures in the church. As time goes by, women will exercise ever increasing influence within the religious disciplines.

There is no reason why they could not even now serve as advisers and consultants to Vatican congregations and other official bodies of the church.

But the examples don't end there.

Theologically and doctrinally, one doesn't have to be a priest to be a cardinal. Historically, the college of cardinals has had non-ordained members, with full voting rights.

If the church's leadership really

wished to demonstrate its belief in the "equality of women in the church," notwithstanding its official opposition to their ordination, it could do so in one simple act: by including women on the next list of new cardinals, the present Code of Canon Law notwithstanding.

This would be no token gesture. By reason of their membership in the college of cardinals, women would directly participate in the election of the next pope. In the meantime, they could be appointed to major Vatican congregations.

What possible reason could one have for denying women such opportunities as these to exercise real partnership with men in the church's governance and direction?

If the door to ordination is really the only one that is locked to women, then why not open the other doors that are still closed to them?

Schott has insisted that she bears no prejudice whatever against people of color, but critics have a right to ask why there is only one black face among 45 in her team's front office.

The bishops, in their turn, have insisted that they bear no prejudice against women in the church, but critics have a right to ask why there are no women at all — not one — in high-level church offices for which ordination isn't an essential requirement.

The first case only jeopardized the reputation of a major-league baseball team. In the second case, the stakes are a bit higher.

# Christ is not divided, neither should we be

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

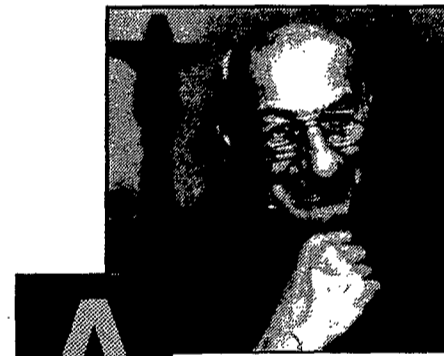
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 4:12-23. (R1) Isaiah 8:23-9:3. (R2) 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17.

Jesus saw John's arrest as the signal to begin His public ministry. He began in Galilee.

During Jesus' time there were 204 villages in Galilee, each having a population of at least 15,000 people. That meant there were more than three million people in an area that was only 50 miles from north to south and 25 miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean Sea.

Galilee comes from a Hebrew word meaning "circle." Galilee was a land encircled by pagan nations: Phoenicia to the west, Syria to the north and east, and Samaria to the south. The great roads of the ancient world empires passed through Galilee — "the seaward road."

These contacts with pagan neighbors and traders made the Galileans a people open to new ideas. The historian Josephus (A.D. 37-100), who once governed Galilee, wrote that the Galileans "were ever fond of innovations and were by nature disposed to change ... they were men of courage, never cowards." The density of



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Galilee's populations and the openness of the Galileans made Galilee an ideal place to begin the Gospel's proclamation.

This land of Galilee originally had been allotted by Joshua to the tribes of Aser, Naphtali and Zabulun. These tribes never quite succeeded in conquering the Canaanites. Intermarriages happened and a mixed population resulted.

In 734 B.C., when Assyria swept down on Israel like the wolf on the fold, the tribes of Zabulum and Neph-

tali were its prime target. Many of the people were deported to distant Nineveh. Aliens moved in and injected as much foreign blood into the remnant left behind that Isaiah spoke of "Galilee of the Gentiles." The people sat in darkness.

To comfort this remnant, Isaiah foretold that one day these tribes would see a great light that would bring joy as deep as that experienced by men at harvest time, a rejoicing like that of the Israelites when they divided the spoils of the Midianites after Gideon's smashing victory.

The responsorial refrain says that this saving light is the Lord Himself. St. Matthew sees Jesus as this Lord of light and salvation. For Jesus came proclaiming good news, dispelling ignorance and error and curing the diseased and the suffering. He came healing mind and body. And He traveled the very roads over which Assyria had marched. Assyria brought darkness; He brought light.

St. Paul in the second reading, asks us to reflect that light. How? By building unity into the Christian community — to stop "quarreling among yourselves."

A few years ago the United Methodist Church revised its hymnal. The revision committee considered

dropping "Onward Christian Soldiers" because of its militant tone. But they did not because more than 11,000 letters of protest told the committee not to do so.

Written by the operetta composer Arthur S. Sullivan of the Gilbert and Sullivan team, the tune is very easy to sing.

The text was written by an Anglican minister, Sabine Baring-Gould, as a processional to be sung by children as they marched from one village to another for a religious festival. "The cross of Jesus going on before" referred to the processional cross. "See his banners go" referred to the banners carried by the children.

Stanza 2 makes it clear that the battle is a spiritual struggle, a battle that requires the unanimity of a marching army, rather than separate bodies marching to their own drummer.

Stanza 3 states this: "We are not divided, all one body we, one in hope and doctrine, one in charity."

This ideal is what St. Paul insists upon in his letter to the Corinthians. Christ is not divided.

During the Church Unity Octave, pray for Christian unity. "Prayer is the soul of the whole ecumenical movement" (On Ecumenism, #8). And unity is its goal.

# Kids' Chronicle

Kids' Chronicle presents a Bible story, and such features as "King Solomon's Wisdom," the "Bible Times," and a bimonthly contest.

Another way to help you bring faith home to your kids.