

# Old expression still relevant today

**Father Richard P. McBrien**  
Syndicated columnist

When I was a young seminarian many years ago, we would occasionally hear a warning from our professors that, after ordination, we shouldn't spend all of our time "saving the saved." Although that old-fashioned expression isn't used much anymore, there is a point to it still today.

What it means is that those who minister in the church should do so with the mind of Jesus, who insisted that he "was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). That was also the mandate he gave his 12 apostles: "go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:5).

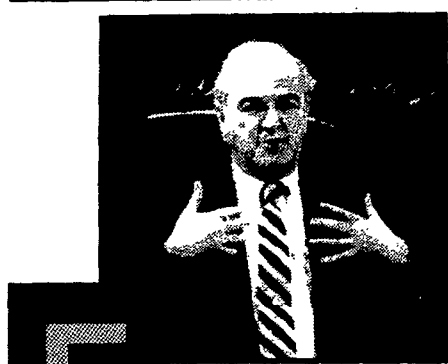
The phrase has special reference to the so-called "people of the land," those who — for whatever reason — were marginalized, alienated from the main circles of religious leadership and ministerial concern.

Jesus had a particular interest in such people, so much so that he was often derided by his enemies as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34).

He healed the ritually unclean, told stories about the lost who are found, the uninvited who are invited, and the last who shall be first.

He took meals with the poor, with unpopular public officials, and even with prostitutes.

If Jesus had been preoccupied with "saving the saved," he would have dined most evenings with his most



## ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

generous supporters and he would have been seen most often in the company of the religiously devout. "Good, upright" Jews. People of quality.

But that was as far from Jesus' ministerial agenda as could be. His ministry was to those whom society and the religious establishment had pushed to the margins — the types of individuals whom many "good Christians" today condemn: gays and lesbians, the divorced and remarried, couples living together before marriage, women who have had an abortion, people of color, men who assert their rights and defend their human dignity, and the men who support them.

But "saving the saved" also has an educational side to it. It means speaking and writing only for people who

never think critically about their faith and are happy to keep it that way.

But, like Jesus, our ministry — those of us who preach and teach and speak and write — is to those who are in need of more than that; namely, a mature, intelligent, adult-level, and honest exposition of the faith and of its impact on problems and issues that are important to us as Catholics and as human beings.

Preaching pieties and serving up canned theology may not "disturb" those who are described, in paternalistic fashion, as the "simple faithful," but it *does* disturb and even insult those who expect to be addressed as adults not children.

Early last month I received a letter that makes the point better than I can. It came from a woman in upstate New York.

"I credit your writing for restoring the little faith I had left in the Catholic approach to living.

"I don't know why (name of Catholic paper) began appearing in my mailbox, as I've never subscribed to this publication nor do I belong to any particular parish. When it first arrived, I'd take the time it takes to walk from my front door to the recyclable bin to glance at the cover page and then, toss it out with the rest of the junk mail.

"Then, one night when I was waiting for dinner to cook I rescued the (paper) from the recyclables and started to actually read through it. Just as I thought: more of the same narrow-minded voices speaking with man-made vision designed to keep

thoughts and actions compartmentalized for the sake of sacred identity, and all the while their Fear of Self-Doubt and Hate smolders beneath their religious rhetoric.

"I was just about to abandon my reading when I came across your article. I don't remember now what it was about, but I do remember having to read it twice because I couldn't believe my eyes the first time through.

"Yet, even after the second reading, I couldn't find the standard do's and don'ts, and my search for something anything negative about women or gays or the Pro-Choice movement came up empty.

"You didn't blast anyone for being different and most important of all, you didn't scare off the reader, you invited them in.

"I figured your piece must have been a fluke and next week you'd be ranting and raving about the Godlessness of some little sinner, sitting in the second pew, because (s)he refuses to kneel in church.

"I was happy to discover that I was wrong about that. Your essays consistently reflect the humanity, I believe, Jesus was aiming for when he spoke of the Holy Spirit's true nature.

"I still toss (the newspaper) in the recyclable bin, but not until I've read your essay."

Sad to say, some of "the saved" bitterly resent and actively resist any serious effort to reach out to these others, as Jesus did. But what is sadder, there are bishops who yield to the pressures of "the saved" rather than endure their wrath.

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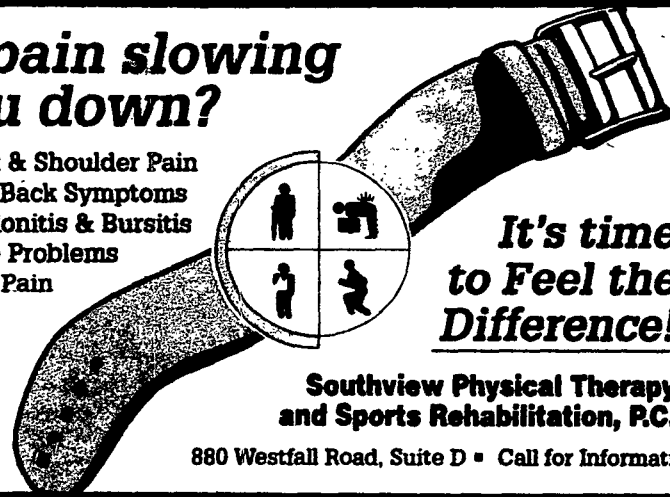
The Catholic Courier is looking for people to sell advertising — on a freelance basis — for a special edition commemorating the Diocese of Rochester's 125th anniversary. The edition will be published on Sept. 30, 1993

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Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	2 St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	3 Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	4 Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	5 St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	6 Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	7 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	9 St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	10 Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	11 Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	12 St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	13 Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	14 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	16 St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	17 Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	18 Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	19 St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	20 Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	21 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	23 St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	24 Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	25 Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	26 St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	27 Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	28 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Stanislaus St. Theodore	30 St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	31 Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	29 Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	30 St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus St. Jude the Apostle	31 Holy Ghost Most Precious Blood St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	32 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle

### SATURDAY

Good Shepherd 1 St. Thomas the Apostle	8 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle	15 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle	22 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle	29 Good Shepherd St. Thomas the Apostle
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### BINGO TIMES & LOCATIONS

<b>Bishop Kearney</b> 125 Kings Hwy. S. 671-1065 Wed. 8pm	<b>St. Cecilia's</b> 2732 Culver Rd. 467-4266 Fri. 8pm
<b>Good Shepherd</b> 3288 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-3518 Sat. 7:30pm	<b>St. Charles Borromeo</b> 64 Malden Lane 663-3223 Mon. 8pm
<b>Guardian Angels Church</b> 2061 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-1412 Wed. 7:30pm	<b>St. James</b> 119 Brockley Rd. 482-9796 Thur. 7:30pm
<b>Holy Apostles</b> 6 Austin St. 254-7170 Tues. 7:30pm	<b>St. Jude the Apostle</b> 4100 Lyell Rd. 247-4322 Thurs. 7:45pm
<b>Holy Family Church</b> 899 Jay Street 328-3110 Fri. 8pm	<b>St. Mark's</b> 54 Kuhn Rd. 225-3710 Fri. 8pm
<b>Holy Family Home School Assoc.</b> 899 Jay St. 328-4800 Wed. 7:30pm	<b>St. Mary</b> Lycium Hall, Auburn 315-252-8545 Mon. 7:30pm
<b>Holy Ghost</b> 220 Coldwater Rd. 467-3535 Fri. 8pm	<b>St. Michael's</b> 869 Clinton Ave. N 325-4040 Thur. 7:30 & 9pm
<b>Most Precious Blood</b> 173 Stenson St. 458-6079 Fri. 7:30pm	<b>St. Rita's</b> 1006 Maple Dr. 671-1100 Sun. 7:30pm
<b>Our Lady of Mercy</b> 600 Denise Rd. 665-0775 Tue. 7:30pm	<b>St. Stanislaus</b> 1150 Hudson Ave. 467-1472 Sun. 6:15pm, Tue. 7:30pm, Thur. 8pm
<b>Our Lady of Perpetual Help</b> 923 Portland Ave. 467-2725 Wed. 7:30pm	<b>St. Theodore</b> 170 Spencerport Rd. 429-4811 Sun. 7:30pm
<b>St. Anne</b> 1600 Mt. Hope Ave. 271-3260 Thur. 7:30pm	<b>St. Thomas the Apostle</b> 41 Colebrook Dr. 342-2323 Sat. 8pm
<b>St. Boniface</b> 15 Whalin St. 271-1468 Sun. 7:45pm	