

Group exaggerated unworthiness

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

Just as the month of May has been traditionally devoted to Mary, so the month of June has been devoted to the Sacred Heart.

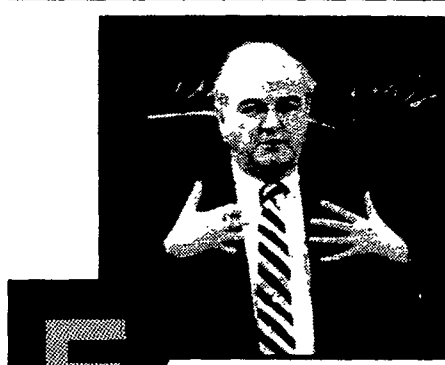
Saints John Eudes and Jane de Chantal wrote often about the heart of Jesus, and a feast in honor of the Sacred Heart was established in 1672 at John Eudes' instigation.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart received its real impetus, however, from St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French Sister of the Visitation, who claimed to have received visions of the heart of Jesus between 1673-75.

The devotion spread throughout Western Europe during the 17th century, some say in response to Jansenism, a movement that tended to exaggerate human unworthiness before a God who could be approached only in fear and trembling.

Focus on the heart of Jesus was intended to remind Catholics of God's love and compassion manifested in Jesus' suffering and death on our behalf — perhaps to counter the Jansenist teaching that salvation was almost impossible for most people.

While the Jansenists had counseled



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

infrequent reception of holy Communion because of human unworthiness, Margaret Mary encouraged frequent Communion — especially on the first Friday of each month. It took a while, however, for her words to be heeded.

Many readers will remember the period before Vatican II when Catholics did not receive holy Communion frequently. They felt themselves unworthy unless they had "gone to confession" beforehand, even if they didn't have a mortal sin to confess.

Some of the more "daring" might have continued to receive Communion for two or three weeks after confession, but they would have drawn the line about there. It was as if the spiritual "energy" generated by confession inevitably wore off after about three weeks, and one needed to get a spiritual "battery charge" before receiving again.

Benediction and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament were popular devotions that tended to reinforce this mentality. The host was something to be held in awe rather than eaten. And when it was eaten, you had better not let it touch your teeth!

Indeed, that warning sometimes caused spiritually traumatic experiences for young children about to receive their first holy Communion.

As Catholics grew older, concern about chewing the host subsided and moral scrupulosity took over: Did I "entertain" that impure thought? Did I swallow a drop of water when I brushed my teeth, and, if so, did I break my fast?

Don't laugh. I know of a good Catholic woman married many years ago who still feels the anguish of not having been able to receive Communion at her wedding Mass. She had

been sick to the point of fainting, was given a tiny swallow of water to revive herself, and then was told by the priest that she couldn't receive — at her own wedding!

Another contemporary of mine, in junior high school at the time, actually asked a priest if a snowflake that touched her tongue had broken her fast. The priest knew her to be a "scroup" (as such people were called in those days) and told her not to worry.

The Jansenists have been blamed, fairly or not, for this and for many other things over the years, not least of which is the unhealthy obsession with sexual sins on the part of pre-Vatican II Irish and American Catholics.

Whether it was the Jansenists' fault or not, their "germ" was carried across the Atlantic, and many of us Catholics got infected with it. As a result, we tied ourselves up in spiritual knots over trivia, while the essentials of Christian faith too often went by the boards: things like forgiveness, compassion, magnanimity, justice — and a sense of humor.

If getting back to such essentials as these is what devotion to the Sacred Heart was intended to promote, let's have more of it.

Expert's vision is exciting, but is it possible?

By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Syndicated columnist

Much has been made of the fact that most of the growth in our economy in recent years has been in the so-called "service" industries. But perhaps something remains to be said for the spirituality of actually making physical products to sell.

Joseph O'Rourke thinks so. "Manufacturing has a special power — from its combination of people and machines; its complex coordination of resources; its ordering of special knowledge, honed skills, different functions, and unique judgments; and its pure physical prowess — to make more things than anyone could alone ... and to make them bigger, or finer, or more important for others who cannot do it for themselves," said O'Rourke, a management consultant in Oak Park,



FAITH AND WORK

Ill. "On any list of human challenge and achievement, a successful manu-

facturing institution ranks high," O'Rourke argued. Although he admits that manufacturing has been in decline in this country, O'Rourke noted that "today someone made a first sale, an inventor showed a prototype, a friend received a promotion, an owner named a company, a new immigrant borrowed from a relative to open a business, a quality team was rewarded for an innovation, a manufacturer was certified as a supplier for a Japanese firm, a CEO had lunch with Russian traders ..."

U.S. manufacturers start, O'Rourke maintains, from a position of functioning but faltering values. "We are successful manufacturers, responsible owners, skilled technical workers, and moral managers of resources for which we are accountable to the community. We know now that our poor and those who pray for them have a stake in our

success, for wealth in the end comes from manufacturing productivity," he said. "Profit and growth will come from our management of assets toward excellence, not from financial manipulation nor chasing phantom customers with a futile cry."

"Our first flag," he insisted, "must be manufacturing quality and customer service. We can believe and behave our way to true competitiveness. But we know that the first step to quality management competence is productivity, and the first step toward productivity is the development of highly skilled, high-performing, highly motivated (that means highly compensated and self-directed) teams of workers."

O'Rourke's vision for manufacturing in this country is appealing, exciting and spiritual. But is it possible?

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