

Tobacco industry should read encyclical

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

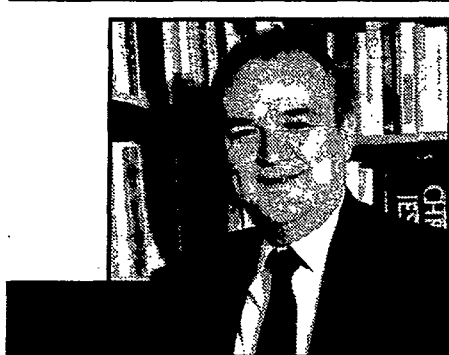
A handful of Catholic neo-conservative commentators have, in recent years, traded on their ardent celebration of the American system of free enterprise. Their contributions are warmly and regularly welcomed on the Op-ed pages of *The Wall Street Journal* and in various business-oriented magazines.

To be sure, there's nothing wrong with that as such. Most of us are beneficiaries of the American capitalist system. But the system doesn't work so well for everybody. Millions of U.S. citizens have fallen through the cracks, and they live in circumstances that are sometimes more reminiscent of the Third World than of the richest country on the face of the planet earth.

Perhaps the celebration of the free enterprise system would have a greater ring of credibility if it acknowledged its failures a bit more often. Instead, its celebrants make excuses or lay the blame on the victims, as in a rape case.

If only the poor worked harder — or worked at all. If only they had higher standards of moral behavior — like our own. If only they were more God-fearing, thrifty, industrious, family-oriented, self-disciplined.

One is reminded of a caustic 1960s Herblock cartoon in *The Washington Post*. Senator Barry Goldwater, then U.S. conservatism's icon, was depicted leaning over a poor waif and shaking his finger at him. The caption read: "Why don't you go out and in-



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herit a department store?" — an allusion to the fact that Mr. Goldwater himself got his own economic start through such an inheritance.

Celebrants of the American free enterprise system also seem to fall silent in the race of some of the system's most blatantly unethical behavior.

The recent disclosures regarding the American tobacco industry are a case in point.

Hard evidence has surfaced that the tobacco industry has known for at least two decades what any schoolchild knows today: Smoking is dangerous to your health. It causes cancer, heart disease, strokes, and any number of other debilitating and terminal illnesses.

What is perhaps less well-known is that tobacco companies, on the basis of their own secret research conduct-

ed during the 1970s, also learned a lot more about their product's addictive qualities.

In at least one instance for which documentary evidence has just come to light, the industry had succeeded in isolating some of the hazardous components of smoke and had begun developing a safer product that would also be less addictive in nature.

A senior attorney for one company recommended that much of this medical research be declared "dead-wood" and shipped to England, and that "no notes, memos or lists" should be made (*The New York Times*, 6/18/94). The industry was afraid of lawsuits.

It was about this time that the public was becoming increasingly aware of the serious health hazards inherent in the use of tobacco products. In 1966, warning labels were first required on cigarette packaging, and in 1971 cigarette advertising was banned from radio and television. Two years later smokers and non-smokers were separated on airlines, and more recently smoking on airlines has been banned altogether.

In 1988 the surgeon general issued a report declaring that cigarette smoking is not only dangerous to health but also addictive, a finding established by the same scientific standards that apply to illicit drugs.

But earlier this year, in hearings held by the U.S. House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, top executives of the seven major American tobacco companies denied — each in his turn — that nicotine is

addictive and that smoking cigarettes may cause cancer.

Several weeks later new evidence was disclosed that a major cigarette manufacturer had secretly developed a genetically engineered tobacco that would more than double the amount of nicotine delivered in some cigarettes, and that the company had already used it in five domestic brands, including three labeled "light."

Why would such successful, highly paid paragons of democratic capitalism do such a thing? Because they know that once people are educated to the dangers of tobacco products, they are more likely to quit smoking and less likely to take up the habit.

The challenge to the profit-driven tobacco industry, therefore, is obvious: first, initiate as many young, unformed and impressionable Americans as possible to the cigarette habit and then manipulate the addictive qualities of tobacco to keep most of them paying customers for life; and, second, expand the market into as many foreign countries as possible before they, too, wake up to the dangers of smoking.

"The purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavoring to satisfy their basic needs and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society."

Those words are from one of the neo-conservatives' favorite documents: Pope John Paul II's encyclical, "Centesimus Annus" (n. 35).

Masses should transform faithful

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:1-15; (R1) 2 Kings 4:42-44; (R2) Ephesians 4:1-6.

We are currently in Cycle B of the Church Year. This cycle's Sunday Gospels are taken from the Gospel according to St. Mark. But Mark's Gospel is only 16 chapters; so for the next five Sundays (July 24 to Aug. 21), the Sunday Gospels will be taken from the long Chapter 6 (71 verses of the Gospel according to St. John. Chapter 6 is John's theology of the Eucharist.

This chapter has four parts: (1) the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish; (2) Jesus walking on the water; (3) the bread of life discourse; and (4) the promise of the Eucharist.

John begins the promise of the Eucharist with two miracles, for the Eucharist is the mystery of faith. These two miracles — the multiplication of loaves showing Jesus has power over substances, and His walking on water showing He has power over His body — prove the reasonableness of having faith in Jesus even when He promises what appears to be a hard saying, like



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giving us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink.

The multiplication of loaves showed that Jesus was a far greater prophet than Elisha, who only fed a hundred with 20 loaves. Jesus fed 50 times that number with one quarter the number of loaves. He didn't create new loaves, either. He simply multiplied loaves, proving His power over the substance of things. Then He walked on water, proving His body could defy the laws

of nature. The conclusion is that such a One ought to be believed.

Even though we might not clearly understand the transubstantiation of the substance of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, we ought to believe it, because Jesus said so. Of the bread, He said, "This is my body;" and of the wine, "This is my blood." He promised He would do this; He showed by His miracles He could do this; therefore we ought to believe that He does do this at every Mass. As the great St. Thomas put it:

Sight, touch and taste in These are each deceived;

The ear alone most safely is believed:

I believe all the Son of God has spoken,

Than Truth's own word there is no truer token.

Incidentally the line, "I believe all the Son of God has spoken" is the motto of Aquinas Institute in Rochester.

St. Paul says, "Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin" (R2). Do you realize that the sacramental grace of the Eucharist is unity? The bond of unity is love. And love comes from outside us.

Love has to be poured into us like gasoline into a car.

The source of love is God: God the Holy Spirit and God in holy Communion. Every Mass gives us an influx of the Holy Spirit and holy Communion — the God of love and the sacrament of love. Thus right after the sacrifice of the Mass, we pray, "May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit."

Thus St. Augustine said: "The Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church." The church makes the Eucharist by the words of consecration uttered by a priest; and the Eucharist makes the church by making us more and more loving people by giving us the Holy Spirit and the body and blood of Christ in holy Communion. The church becomes visible when it becomes a community of loving people.

So much hatred, violence and strife exists in the world today, precisely because the Mass is neglected. Every Mass should transform us more and more into loving people. Neglect the Mass and whence shall come the bond of unity — love?

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