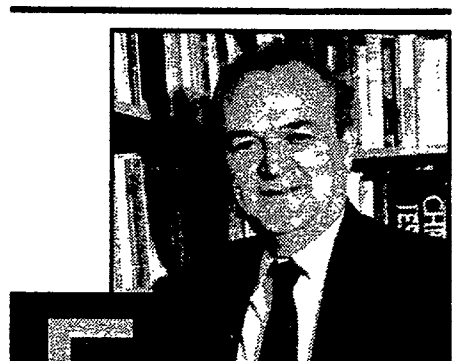


# Consult Gospel to solve moral debates

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

Most Catholics would readily agree that the following principles, values or moral imperatives are among those that are at the heart and center of the Gospel:

1. The call to love one another. Jesus said our love for one another is the sign by which others will know that we are his disciples (John 13:34-35).
2. The call to love even our enemies. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you ... If you love those who love you," Jesus asked, "what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:27, 32).
3. The call to forgive one another. Jesus said we cannot ask forgiveness for our own sins unless we are also ready to forgive those who sin against us (Matthew 6:12).
4. The call always to seek reconciliation with one another. Jesus said we should not presume to offer sacrifice to God unless and until we have been reconciled with our brother or sister (Matthew 5:23-24).
5. The call to renounce revenge. "If anyone strikes you on the cheek," Jesus said, "offer the other also" (Luke 6:29).
6. The call to avoid judging and condemning others. "Do not judge," Jesus said, "and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be



## ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

condemned ... first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye" (Luke 6:37, 42).

7. The call to avoid self-righteousness, presumption and resentment toward others. Jesus repudiated the proud Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14) and the resentful elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son (15:25-30). He condemned those who tried to shut the doors of the Kingdom of God so that others could not enter it (23:13) and said the publicans and the prostitutes would enter the Kingdom before their detractors would (21:31-32).
8. The call to befriend those whom society looks down upon. Jesus made himself the friend of outcasts

(Matthew 11:19) and did not avoid their company (Mark 2:16).

9. The call to serve one another, humbly and unselfishly. Jesus gave us an example when he washed the feet of his disciples (Matthew 13:4-15; see also Luke 22:27). "But when you give a banquet," he said, "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:13-14).

10. The call to serve the poor. Jesus singled out the poor in the Beatitudes, insisting that the reign of God will be theirs (Luke 6:20), as did Mary in her Magnificat: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (1:52-53). Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man (16:19-31) is particularly compelling. Indeed, Pope John Paul II frequently cites it in summoning the church to the service of the poor and the powerless.

11. The corresponding call to beware of riches and the attachment to possessions. Jesus said it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:25). He said those who would be his disciples should be ready to sell all that they have and give to the poor (Mark 10:21).

12. The call always to be just in our

dealings with others. Jesus attacked the Scribes and the Pharisees for straining at gnats and swallowing camels, and for neglecting the weightier matters of the law, including justice first (Matthew 23:23).

If, on the other hand, one were to draw up a list of items that divide many members of the church today, the following would surely be among the entries: abortion, homosexuality, contraception, premarital sex, divorce-and-remarriage, ordination of women, feminist understandings of God, feminism in general, in-vitro fertilization and sterilization.

One cannot fail to notice that each pertains in some way to human sexuality and that together they are concerned with human reproduction, gender differences and relationships that are rooted in, and expressive of, human sexuality.

Why is it that these seem to be the primary issues dividing the church today, consuming so much of its time and ministerial energy? And why is it that so often in our debates and activities related to these issues we seem to violate the unquestioned moral imperatives at the heart of the Gospel itself?

Without closing off all discussion and pastoral initiatives on the sex- and gender-related issues, would it not be possible for the church to invest a little more time and energy in emphasizing those central moral imperatives — and in trying to live up to them as well?

# Ways for work to reflect spirituality

By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce  
Syndicated columnist

One of the difficulties in developing a spirituality of work is that most of the "good" words have been taken. The connotation of such words as "contemplation," "meditation," "prayer," "holiness" — even "spirituality" itself — is "get away from the world" (or at least set yourself apart from the world).

But a spirituality of work is never going to be possible apart from the ordinary toil of daily life. Whatever disciplines or virtues lead to the development of a spirituality of work must be found in daily work itself. "To work is to pray," St. Benedict said, and the spirituality of work takes him literally.

My spiritual director has asked me to try to name those virtues that might be the basis for a spirituality of work.



## FAITH AND WORK

Here are four:

1. Competence. More than anything else, the spirituality of work

means doing a good, competent job at a worthwhile occupation. This includes, I believe, producing quality goods or services at reasonable prices while maintaining concern for colleagues, customers, community and environment. Practitioners of the spirituality of work seek competence as their first and foremost goal.

2. Integrity. A spirituality of work demands integrity — the dictionary definition is "the quality or state of being complete" — in work, personal, community and family life. Those who try to live a spirituality of work understand that they cannot achieve holiness in their work if they do not achieve it in the other aspects of their lives, and vice versa.

3. Compassion. This is the virtue that allows the spirituality of work to transcend narrow self-interest. Compassion allows the "spiritual" worker

to feel and respond to the needs of others with love and generosity, without expecting or demanding anything in return.

4. Reflection. While this word is much like "meditation" or "contemplation," the spirituality of work gives the idea of quietly and systematically thinking about spiritual things a slightly different twist. Rather than focusing on eternal or mystical verities, the practitioners of a spirituality of work reflect on the work they are doing — in the context of what they hope to be doing. Through regular and disciplined reflection, they search — in the context of their daily work — for their center, for the place from which they want to act, for their true identity.

The spirituality of work is a spirituality of competence, integrity, compassion and reflection. These are pretty "good" words, too.

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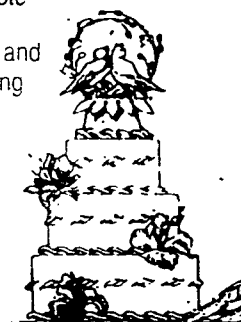
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