

## Catechism's publication is first step

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

I've been asked at least a few times during the past several weeks whether I would consider doing an article comparing the newly translated Catechism of the Catholic Church and the revised and updated edition of my own "Catholicism" book, both just published in June.

Because I am still immersed in the final editing stages of an ambitious one-volume encyclopedia of "Catholicism" that my publisher and I hope will be ready for release next spring, I'm limited in what I can do right now.

In any case, I would prefer that someone else make the comparisons. One should not be the judge of his or her own case. On the other hand, if an enterprising editor were to invite Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to do the same thing, in the same issue, that would be another matter entirely.

I'll await any proposals. In the meantime, I should like to share an initial impression about the two works' respective structures, independently of their treatment of specific topics. Comparing the way books are structured can be useful because organization is already an act of interpretation.

The Catechism has a fourfold structure: the Creed, the sacraments, morality (the life of faith), and prayer.

"Catholicism," on the other hand, has seven major parts, with two introductory chapters (on the nature of



### ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

Catholicism and on faith). The seven parts are: human existence (nature, grace, original sin), God (including chapters on revelation and other religions), Jesus Christ, the church, the sacraments, morality, and spirituality (including liturgy, prayer, and devotions, Mary and the saints, and the last things — judgment, heaven, purgatory, hell).

Although both books are about the Catholic faith and tradition, the Catechism doesn't address the question of Catholicity until the section on the church (p. 220). The "Catholicism" book starts with the question, "What is Catholicism?" in Chapter 1 where, unlike the catechism, it explains the distinction not only between Roman Catholics and non-Catholics, but also

between Roman and non-Roman (i.e. Eastern-rite) Catholics.

While the Catechism's first major doctrinal topic is God, "Catholicism's" is the human condition and the human person, in keeping with the structure of Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and its emphasis on the need first to read the "signs of the times" and then to interpret them "in the light of the Gospel" (n. 4).

The initial emphasis on the human person in the "Catholicism" book is also consistent with Pope John Paul II's own insistence that the human person is at the heart of the Gospel.

In his very first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), he wrote: "In reality, the name for that deep amazement at man's worth and dignity is the Gospel, that is to say the Good News. It is also called Christianity" (n. 10, para. 2). It is a theme the pope has repeated and emphasized ever since.

At the heart of any theological and doctrinal treatment of the human person is grace. We are not, and never have been, in a state of "pure nature." We are, and always have been, destined for glory. We are offered grace, which is the divine presence, and it is through grace that we are, in a real sense, divinized.

The Catechism's reflection on the nature of the human person focuses on original sin, but surprisingly grace isn't treated until the section on morality, toward the end of the Catechism.

Nevertheless, the structures of the

two books are similar in many ways. In both, the presentation of the doctrine of God is followed by that on Jesus Christ, which is followed, in turn, by that on the church.

But this is where the use of the Apostles' Creed as the basis of organization gets in the Catechism's way. Eschatology (judgment, heaven, purgatory, hell) becomes sandwiched in between the church and the sacraments.

The situation arises because the three articles on the "last things" ("I believe in the forgiveness of sins;" "I believe in the resurrection of the body;" "I believe in life everlasting") come at the end of the creed, following the article on the church ("I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"), while the sacraments aren't even mentioned in the Creed.

Sacraments, however, are an integral part of the church's mystery. Either they should be treated within ecclesiology (as they were in the first edition of "Catholicism"), or given separate treatment, but immediately after the church (as in the new edition of "Catholicism").

These are not necessarily major problems. The Catechism, after all, was not originally intended to be read and used by the general public in its present form, but rather as a basis for the development of national catechisms all over the world.

The publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is supposed to be only the first step in the process.

## Heart determines our life's direction

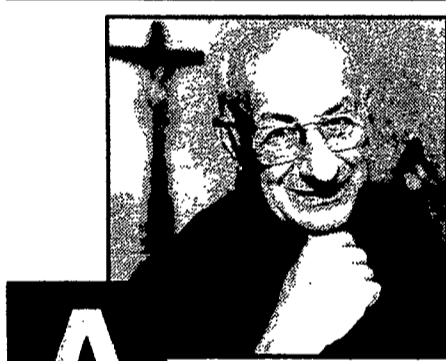
By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23; (R1) Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8; (R2) James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27.

In Sunday's Gospel Jesus gives a profound insight into man's actions long before professional psychologists existed. He answered the question, "Why does a man do what he does — do good or evil?"

Psychologists tell us that one of a 4-year-old child's main tendencies is to blame others for messes they create. "I didn't do it, he did it!" Some never seem to grow out of this habit of blaming others for their faults. How often we hear: "My parents were too strict;" "they gave me too much freedom;" "if I hadn't met her or him!;" "if he didn't start me on pot or drugs." Or the church: "Why did she have to make all those changes?" Or God: "He knew I'd be tempted. Why did He permit it?"

In a sensitivity session I once witnessed, everyone talked about his or her problems. Nobody had the same problem. Yet everyone had one thing



### A WORD FOR SUNDAY

in common: no one blamed the problem on himself or herself. Everyone was sure it was caused by some other person or set of circumstances beyond his or her control.

Adam had the best of circumstances. He had no genetic weaknesses, yet he sinned. Jesus, the second Adam, had the worst of circum-

stances: He was in a desert where devils were supposed to dwell, and He was 40 days without food or water. Yet when He was tempted, He triumphed.

Where then is the seat of all our problems? From whence does good or evil arise? Jesus put His finger on it when He said: "Wicked designs come from the deep recesses of the heart ..." In other words, good and evil come from within a person, not from without. Thus Shakespeare has Cassius say: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings."

Why do we do good things? Why do we perform evil acts? The reason why is because we want to. If there were no desire within, there would be no evil without. Sin is due to the pull of our evil thoughts and desires. Without this inner wanting, temptation would be helpless. What good is a camera if you do not have sensitized film in it. So no temptation can tempt us if there is nothing in us to which it can appeal.

It is the things we like or dislike that make us or break us. Our heart determines the direction of our lives as

the rudder of a ship determines where it goes. The heart is like the spring in a clock: all the clock's movements depend on the spring. The heart is like a mint factory, coining thoughts and desires. Whether the currency of action will be good or counterfeit will depend on the thoughts and desires coined in the heart.

The thoughts and desires of our hearts often depend on what we see and where we go; what we read, and the company we keep. The mill will grind whatever is put into it. So God gave us eyelids and feet to control what we see and where we go and the company we keep. It is no use pumping water out of a leaking ship if the leak is not plugged. It is no use trying to reform our lives, if our reformation does not touch our hearts. For "all evils come from within and render a man impure."

As you think in your heart, so shall you be. William James put it this way: Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap your destiny.



**Southview Physical Therapy  
and Sports Rehabilitation**

*Feel the Difference!*

**SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY  
MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN RELIEVING:**

- Neck & Shoulder Pain
- Low Back Symptoms
- Tendonitis & Bursitis
- Knee Problems
- TMJ Pain

WESTFALL PROFESSIONAL PARK  
880 Westfall Road, Suite D  
Call For Information



**271-3380**

You've Got Some **ROYAL**  
**CARIBBEAN** Coming

Special rates aboard the **Song of America** sailings from November 12 through December 17...6 fabulous ports...San Juan... Martinique... Barbados...Antigua...St. Maarten...St. Thomas. Rates start at \$899 plus port tax plus special roundtrip San Juan airfare of \$149.

**Call us for this and other cruise specials**

*Judy Graper*  
**Travel**

**Judy Graper Travel - (716) 385-3820**  
The Barn Bazaar • Clover Street at Jefferson Rd.  
Pittsford, New York 14534