

## Abhor the whirlwind, quiet the wind

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

"For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind," the prophet Hosea said of Israel (8:7). It is a line that has been quoted many times, in many different contexts, ever since.

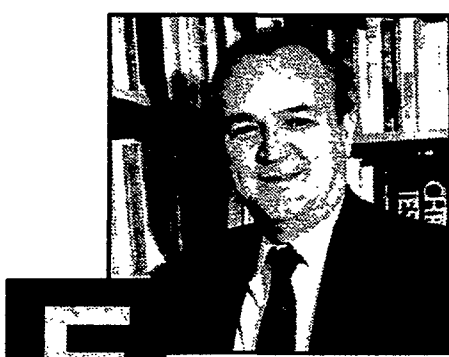
Its point is that our words and actions can have negative consequences far beyond our intentions or our expectations.

Consider two examples: In the presence of her children, a parent continually badmouths a Jewish family that has just moved into the neighborhood. One night her son paints a swastika on the side of the neighbor's house.

A father leaves his loaded gun in the bedroom bureau drawer. His 8-year-old boy finds it and accidentally kills a playmate.

This celebrated biblical saying comes to mind in the case of Father David Trosch, a suspended priest of the Archdiocese of Mobile, Ala.

Father Trosch has become notorious in recent weeks for his open support of the murder of physicians who perform abortions. By his own admission, he is a "good friend" of Paul Hill, the former Presbyterian minister who was charged earlier this summer with two counts of first-degree murder in the killing of Dr. John Britton and his escort in Pensacola, Fla. According to *The New York Times*, Father Trosch's name and that of an organization he founded, Life Enter-



### ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

prises Unlimited, appeared as signers of a petition circulated by Hill before the murders, in which he stated that "all godly action" to defend innocent life was justified, "including the use of force."

Last year Father Trosch had attempted to buy advertising space in *The Mobile Register* to display a drawing that depicts a man pointing a gun at a doctor who is holding a knife over a pregnant woman. The caption read: "Justifiable Homicide?"

Although the paper refused to print the ad, it did publish a story about Father Trosch. After it appeared, Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb warned the priest that if he didn't keep silence about the matter, he would be removed from his parish.

But a published interview followed and Father Trosch was banished to a monastery. Within a month, he left the monastery without the archbishop's permission.

Leaders in the Catholic pro-life movement have been acutely embarrassed by the priest's public position and have taken great pains to distance themselves from his views.

Archbishop Lipscomb himself said that Father Trosch is "as wrong as he can be," and Helen Alvaré, director of information and planning for the U.S. Catholic bishops' Pro-Life Activities Committee in Washington, insisted that Father Trosch is "absolutely unrelated — in fact, in opposition — to the work and the spirit of the pro-life movement."

But is it really the case that Father Trosch's views are "absolutely unrelated" and opposed "to the work and the spirit of the pro-life movement"?

What is the priest saying, after all? That abortion is murder because it directly and intentionally terminates an innocent, unborn human being, a defenseless baby in its mother's womb.

And if it is morally legitimate to take the life of an assailant who is about to kill an innocent person, Father Trosch asks, why is it not right to kill an abortionist who is about to murder an unborn child?

The priest makes reference, by way of argument, to the activities of the French Resistance during World War II. "When they killed the enemy soldiers, did anybody ever admonish

them? In fact, they were considered heroes."

The unborn, he told *The New York Times*, "are persons worthy of defense, like any born person, and they must be defended by any means necessary to protect them, including the death of the assailants, which in this case would be the abortionists and their direct accomplices."

If there is a flaw in the priest's moral argument, where is it? Only an absolute pacifist could say that killing is never justified, whether in self-defense or to defend the life of another.

In a letter circulated throughout the Mobile archdiocese, Archbishop Lipscomb stated that, while abortion is a "moral evil," in a democracy its opponents must use political means to combat it. No one can take the law into their own hands.

Not even to defend innocent human life against a murderous attack? Not even to defend a baby against its killer?

"For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

The "wind" is the rhetoric many use to characterize abortion as murder (which is the direct and intentional killing of an innocent human being) and to characterize the fetus, at whatever stage of development, as a child, or a baby. The "whirlwind" is the murder of physicians who perform abortions.

Those who abhor the whirlwind should quiet the wind.

## We were not promised worldly success

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 9:30-37; (R1) Wisdom 2:17-20; (R2) James 3:16-4:3.

A man named Tom Burns was on an ocean voyage. He shared a dining table with a Frenchman who obviously spoke no English. Since Burns didn't know any French, their meals were enjoyed in silence. The only time they spoke was at the beginning of each meal. The Frenchman would nod at Burns and say, "Bon appetit!" Burns, not sure how to respond, would nod and reply, "Tom Burns."

This had been the pattern of their meals for three days, until one day a friend took Burns aside and berated him.

"You ignoramus!" said Burns' friend. "That French fellow you eat dinner with is not telling you his name. 'Bon appetit' is French for 'Good appetite!' That's what he's saying to you."

The next meal, when the Frenchman entered the dining hall, Burns nodded at him and said, "Bon appetit!"



### A WORD FOR SUNDAY

The Frenchman smiled and replied, "Tom Burns!"

Misunderstandings are a common part of life. It should be no surprise that misunderstandings arose between Jesus and His disciples on occasion.

Several times Jesus had told His disciples what was going to happen to Him once they reached Jerusalem. "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men who will put him to death; three days after his

death he will rise. Even though they heard this at least three times, the disciples misunderstood what Jesus was trying to tell them.

Many people who think they understand Christ are mistaken. The disciples were mistaken here. When they were traveling through Galilee, Jesus noticed that they had been having quite a lively discussion behind Him. So when they got to Capernaum, He asked them, "What were you discussing on the way home?"

This embarrassed them, for they were arguing about who among them was the greatest. They wanted to know who would be second in command behind Jesus. So instead of focusing on what Jesus was teaching them, they were campaigning for the top position.

Jesus chided their foolish behavior. He took a child to show them how out-of-whack their priorities were. He placed the child in front of them and said, "Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake welcomes me." A child speaks to us about simplicity and love. Jesus wanted His disciples to think not in terms of power but in terms of the powerless, the child. The

quest for power has caused much heartache in the world and is a constant threat to the peace of society. Jesus was looking for people who would be willing to give up their own quest for power to a Power that is much greater.

Too many people nowadays have turned the Gospel on its head. They have convinced themselves that following Jesus will make them successful. They preach that Jesus will provide your every need and your every want. They preach that Jesus is the key to prosperous living. But Jesus taught that following Him will not necessarily lead to earthly success, but to service. "If you want to rank first, you must remain ... the servant of all."

That is what the Gospel is all about. It's not about who will chair the board of directors or who will be the first violinist in the orchestra. It is about love, self-giving love. It is about the kind of love Jesus showed. "I am in the midst of you as one who serves." Jesus did not promise us worldly success. Rather He called us to service, to loving service of God and neighbor. That's what He did; and if we do the same, it is enough.



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