



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
**MEDIEVAL BANQUET** — Marie Leo's sixth-grade class social studies class at St. Patrick's School in Seneca Falls joined Mary Ann Bender's sixth-grade class at Geneva's St. Francis/St. Stephen's School for a Medieval Banquet April 28. The banquet featured music, poetry and dancing. (From left) Carla Lorenzetti, Kail Northrup, Lindsay Shaffer and Sarah Francis entertain 'King' Anthony Vassello.

## Theologian says moral theology evolves

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

Moral theology is not rigid. Rather, it is constantly growing and evolving.

That is one of the messages conveyed by Father Richard McCormick, SJ, professor of Christian ethics at the University of Notre Dame, and author of the new book, *Corrective Vision: Explorations in Moral Theology*.

Although some people would prefer unchanging moral standards, Father McCormick said, "Life is not life that. Life does not conform to our rules all the time."

Father McCormick visited Auburn Monday, April 24, to give the opening talks at the Rochester diocese's Priest's Convocation, held April 24-26 at the Holiday Inn. The convocation included discussion of case studies based on moral issues priests face in pastoral ministry.

The theologian also spoke by telephone to the *Catholic Courier* from his Notre Dame Friday April 28, addressing such issues as Vatican II, dissent in the church, and the Senate confirmation hearings on Dr. Henry W. Foster's nomination as U.S. surgeon general.

At the convocation, Father McCormick addresses issues of pluralism and disagreement in the church, Father McCormick reported.

In the telephone interview, the theologian pointed out that Vatican II changed moral theology in the church forever.

"The council made very significant changes and encouraged a new critical spirit in the church," Father McCormick said. "It talked about the importance of the lay voice in the church."

Moreover, the council fathers "acknowledged religious liberty as a right based on the dignity of the person," Father McCormick continued, thus opening the door for accepting other religions. The council also changed the way the church views the relationship between church and state.

As part of the growth engendered by the council — and the recognition that moral theology evolves — the church has found itself changing its views on a range of issues, Father McCormick noted, citing as an example sexual ethics.

The church now recognizes "sexual intercourse is in of itself an act of love, an expression of love," Father McCormick said. "Before, it was always viewed as just the procreative act."

The theologian noted that disagreement in the church is allowed under certain conditions if the person who disagrees has a good reason for doing so and that person continues to respect authority in the church and does not cause public scandal.

Moreover, Father McCormick continued, many people who label some theologians as "dissenters" because they acknowledge differing views do not un-

derstand what the term "dissent" means in the church.

"Both (Pope John Paul II) and Cardinal (Joseph) Ratzinger use dissent to mean organized, public rejection of the teaching authority of the church," Father McCormick explained. "In that sense, most of us are not dissenters."

Similarly, the priest acknowledged that some people who go against church teachings claiming that they are following their "consciences" do not understand how the church views the appropriate exercise of conscience.

"You have to have a properly formed (conscience)," Father McCormick observed. "That means that you turn to all the sources available to form your conscience — Scriptures, the magisterium, moral theologians."

Father McCormick also expressed a blunt opinion about surgeon general nominee Henry Foster, whose confirmation hearings began May 2, and with whom the theologian served on the Department of Health Education and Welfare's Ethics Advisory Board in the late 1970s.

While serving on the board, the two men clashed over such issues as the use of embryos for experimentation. Father McCormick noted that at the time, however, he was not aware of Foster's activities related to abortion or sterilization.

"I think it was a terrible mistake to bring him out there without knowledge of those," Father McCormick said of the nomination. "I think that makes him unacceptable."

## Church

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"Angels exist to reflect the fact that God loves us as individuals," Father Greeley said.

He added that the popular culture has resurrected many Catholic teachings — like that on angels — at a time when the church seems to have forgotten them. Such an attitude is reflected in the absence of iconography in post-Vatican II churches, an iconography that used to distinguish them from their Protestant

counterparts, he said.

"Architects often seem to think if you build a modern church, it can't look like a Catholic church," he said.

"He concluded his speech by noting, however, that the church may be entering a new era when its most powerful traditions and stories can be reinterpreted for the next generation of Catholics.

Father Greeley's talk marked the new John Henry Newman Chair of Roman Catholic Studies at the UR. The University of Rochester Alumni Association sponsored the lecture.

## Fr. Greeley

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John Paul II's latest encyclical, "Evangelium Vitae," which outlined the pontiff's support for the consistent life ethic.

Father Greeley praised the encyclical's strong stance against the death penalty, and added that the pope had challenged Catholics against abortion to also oppose capital punishment.

"I will not take seriously any longer Catholic pro-life people who aren't out demonstrating against the death penalty," Father Greeley concluded.

— Rob Cullivan

## SBI schedules Sister Tobin for ceremony

Sister Mary Luke Tobin, SL, a well-known peace activist and an observer at the Second Vatican Council, will deliver the commencement address at St. Bernard's Institute 8 p.m. Friday, May 12, in the Divinity School auditorium, 1100 S. Goodman St.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, SBI's chancellor, is slated to confer degrees upon this year's graduates. The ceremony is open to the public.

Since entering the Sisters of Loretto in 1927, Sister Mary Luke served as the congregation's president from 1958-1970. In addition to serving as president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious from 1964-1966, she is one of the founders of the International Union of Religious Superiors.

After serving as an observer at Vatican II, she served from 1972 to 1978 as director of Citizen Action on the national staff of Church Women United in New York City. Sister Tobin is also the coordinator of the Thomas Merton Center for Creative Exchange in Denver, Colo.

Best known for her involvement in peace efforts, she serves on the Loretto Community's Disarmament/Economic Conversion Committee; has led workshops and participated in actions for peace at Nevada Nuclear Weapons Test Site; and is a frequent participant in nonviolent actions for peace and justice at such places as Rocky Flats, Lowry Air Force Base and the U.S. Air Force Academy.

This year's recipients for St. Bernard's Institute's degree of masters of arts in theology are: John Antenucci, Veronica Antenucci, Thomas Beck, Bernice Carnahan, Patrick Connelly, Judith Delaney, Joseph Dwyer, Mary Ann Fox, Elaine Korthals, Maureen Lambe, Brian Mahoney, Helen Morone, David Paluskiewicz, Jonathan Scouten, Robert Serenka, Edward Sergeant, Louise Shepard, and Jane Westerman.

Casey Lopata and Betty Sintzenich will be the recipients for the degree of masters in divinity.

For information, call SBI at 716/271-3657.

## UPCOMING TRIPS

### 3 DAY ATLANTIC CITY

Sun. July 23 - Tues. July 25

Taj Mahal Hotel & Casino,

\$202 pp/dbl - \$179 pp/trpl

Includes: Hotel, transportation,

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### WEEKEND IN BOSTON

Fri. Aug. 25 - Mon. Aug. 28

\$550 pp/dbl - \$514 pp/trpl -

\$502 pp/cx/ad

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