

Encyclopedia passed the 'bar car' test

By Father Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

If it were not the result of a broadly collaborative effort, the just-published "HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism" would have escaped mention in this column. Because I am its general editor, any reference might otherwise have been viewed as self-promotional.

But there are 17 associate editors (most of them faculty colleagues at the University of Notre Dame) and 280 individual contributors (many, not most, Notre Dame faculty members and doctoral students).

The one-volume, 1,400-page encyclopedia includes entries on every conceivable aspect of Catholicism: liturgy, saints, sacraments, history, art, architecture, music, literature, theology, spirituality, doctrine, devotions, canon law, religious orders, the Bible, culture, church structures, organizations, ministries — and on and on.

Some individual readers will have fun trying to think of topics that are not included in the encyclopedia. Inevitably, we have missed some. A reporter for the *New York Daily News*, however, has assured me that the volume has passed his "bar car" test.

When I asked what he meant, he said that he took the book home with him one evening on the commuter train. He opened it in the bar car and invited his friends to call out topics to see if they were included in the encyclopedia. He said it passed the test



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

with flying colors.

I am hopeful that when individual Catholics see the book and begin to page through it, they will be struck by two things: (1) Like the "bar car" crowd, they will quickly recognize how comprehensive it is; it's not just about the post-Vatican II Church; and (2) It has no ideological bias.

The first realization — that it is not limited to postconciliar Catholicism — will be immediate because, as readers turn to just about any page at random (as I am now doing right now), they will find such entries as "abbey," "Catholic Daughters of America," "St. Dominic," "Franciscan order," "Lent," "maniple," "Nicene Creed," "Catholicism in Poland," "sacramental character," "St. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton," "thurifer," and "Ursulines."

Those who will look for lengthier entries on major topics will find feature articles on each of the seven sacraments, on God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, on major saints such as Augustine of Hippo, Paul, Peter, and Thomas Aquinas, on the Bible, on the Catholic Church, on the papacy, on missions, on religious orders and congregations, on monasticism, on Vatican Council II, on women in the church, and others.

They will also notice the many tables, charts, maps, and drawings, as well as the time-line at the beginning of the book which allows the reader to see at a glance what was going on simultaneously in the church and in the secular world at 100-year intervals over the entire course of Catholic history.

The 20-page list of popes is another unique feature. Unlike conventional lists that resemble a telephone directory and are about as inviting to read, our list contains not only the names of each of the 262 popes, their nationalities, and their years (or months) in office, but also a thumbnail sketch of each pontificate. Leo VIII, for example, can actually be distinguished from Gregory XII or Urban VIII.

There is a cliché, that you can't tell a book by its cover. In this case, I don't think the cliché applies. The attractive cover informs the prospective reader about the volume's scope. It blends the modern with the traditional, as do the two eight-page color inserts containing stunning reproduc-

tions of Jesus, Mary, the saints, churches, processions, sacred vessels, and various important personages.

The central image on the cover is La Maestra's "Last Supper," surrounded by smaller images of Our Lady of Guadalupe, an African American boy at prayer, an angel, and the famous Golden Dome of Notre Dame. An icon of the Madonna and Child graces the book's spine.

The browser's second realization — that the encyclopedia has no ideological bias, other than a love and respect for the Catholic tradition — will come only after an actual reading of a few brief entries: for example, Mother Angelica, Opus Dei, or the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (a Catholic spin-off of Archbishop Lefebvre's schismatic Society of St. Pius X).

New York's John Cardinal O'Connor is the only living American cardinal included, and *The Wanderer* receives nearly three times as much space as the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Although as general editor I did all I could to ensure the volume's objectivity, we all know that perfect objectivity is impossible, except for God.

There is an entry, for example, on the famous painter Sandro Botticelli, whose frescoes can be found in the Sistine Chapel. Although none of my associate editors had suggested him, I thought he deserved to be included in the encyclopedia. I added his name on my own and wrote the entry myself.

Botticelli was my mother's family name.

Do you know what transubstantiation means?

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 9:11-17; (R1) Genesis 14:18-20; (R2) 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Sunday is the feast of Corpus Christi, two Latin words meaning "the Body of Christ." The feast celebrates Christ's presence among us in the Blessed Sacrament.

In the Middle Ages the best minds in the church probed the question, how can the Son of God be present in a wafer, not just on one altar, but on all altars throughout the world?

Around A.D. 1050, Berengarius created a storm in Europe when he denied Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. One of Berengarius' most vigorous opponents was Heldebert of Tours (c. 1097). He seems to have been the first writer to employ the word transubstantiation to explain Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Berengarius was excommunicated, but died at peace with the church in 1088. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council (with both St. Francis and St. Dominic present) defined that "the bread is changed into the body Christ by the divine power of transubstantiation."

The church adopted the term



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

"transubstantiation" officially at the Council of Trent. Pope Paul VI did the same in his encyclical "*Mysterium Fidei*."

Transubstantiation does not explain how our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament. That is a mystery of faith. Transubstantiation simply shows that the doctrine of His presence is not something contrary to reason.

My latest booklet, titled "Behind the Mass," just recently came out. I gave a copy to each of my parish-

ioners at St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Fleming. And each Sunday I talked about one chapter (there are only six chapters in the booklet). I would suggest that other parishes do the same. The booklet, which gives all of the Mass's theology in plain English, has Bishop Matthew H. Clark's imprimatur.

One of the booklet's chapters is on transubstantiation. It is so sad that so many of our Catholics go to Mass every Sunday and really do not know what the Mass is all about.

For instance, here's a little test for you. Every Mass the priest says, "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith." What is the mystery of faith that we proclaim at Mass? What is a eucharistic acclamation? Should it be in the first, second or third person? Where in the Mass is the sacrifice? The Eucharist is a sacrament — what is the sacramental grace of the Mass? What is the Mass? Why the Mass? I could go on and on. Read "Behind the Mass" for the answers.

Here is a bit from the chapter on transubstantiation: Bishop Samonas of Gaza had come to Jerusalem. A Mohammedan publicly requested that he answer some questions regarding the Blessed Sacrament.

The Mohammedan asked, "How is

it possible for bread and wine to become the body and blood of Christ?"

The bishop replied, "Your body changes the food you eat into your flesh and blood. Can not God do what you can do?"

But how can Christ be entirely present in a small host?"

"The landscape with the blue sky above it," responded the bishop, "is something immense, while your eye is very small. Yet your tiny eye can take in the whole picture. Cannot Christ, then, be present in a small piece of bread?"

"How is it possible for the same Christ to be simultaneously present in all your churches?" the Mohammedan queried.

"To God nothing is impossible," answered the bishop. "When I speak to a single individual, he hears me. Should I address the same words to a 1,000 people, they too would hear the same thing. If I broke a large mirror into a hundred pieces, the image reflected in the large mirror would not be broken; rather, the same image would appear in the hundred fragments. Why cannot Christ be present in many places at the same time?"

Jesus said it. I believe it. That settles it.

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