

Summer filled with saintly days

By Richard P. McBrien
Syndicated columnist

A few of my regular readers may be surprised by the subject of this week's column, but I was drawn for some reason to the "Liturgical Calendar" table in the new *HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*.

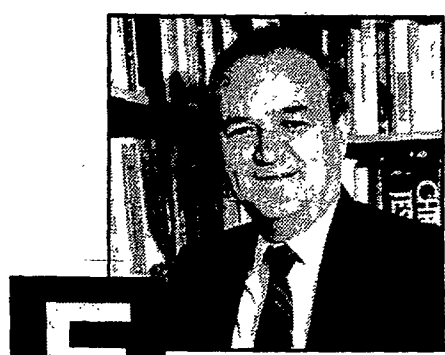
I was struck by the number of major saints, representing some of the most important movements in the history of the church, whose feasts are clustered together during the summer months.

We acknowledge Ss. Peter and Paul (June 29) as the church's dual apostolic pillars. One represents the church's stability; the other, its missionary impulse.

Three other apostles are commemorated during the summer — four if you count Sept. 21 as the season's last day.

St. Thomas (July 3) is best known for his doubts about the resurrection, but there is also a tradition that he carried the Gospel to India and was martyred there. To this very day Malabar Christians are called Thomas Christians. He is patron saint of architects and of the East Indies, but he could very well have been named patron of those who have occasional doubts about the faith. His petitioners would be legion.

St. James the Great (July 25), John's brother, was one of the fishermen whom Jesus called among his first disciples. Jesus gave them the nickname "sons of thunder." James is patron of pilgrims and pharmacists, and of Spain and Chile.



ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

Little is known of St. Bartholomew (Aug. 24), but there is a tradition that, like Thomas, he founded a local Christian community in India, along the Malabar Coast. He's patron of plasterers.

St. Matthew (Sept. 21) might also be included among our summer saints. Traditionally regarded as the first Gospel's author, he is also known for his despised profession. He was a tax collector. Not surprisingly, he is patron of accountants and bookkeepers. Perhaps a more appropriate feast day for him would be April 15, at least in the United States.

Some of the greatest founders of religious orders are also included on the summer calendar: St. Benedict of Nursia (July 11), generally regarded as the

founder of Western monasticism and author of the famous Rule of St. Benedict, is one of Europe's patron saints. Of speleologists, too. (Look it up!)

St. Ignatius of Loyola (July 31) is founder of the Society of Jesus, popularly known as the Jesuits. His great insight was to "see God in all things" and his spiritual genius was to bring together contemplation and action, prayer and service to others. He is patron saint of soldiers (he had been one himself) and of retreats, so many of which follow the Ignatian method.

St. Dominic (Aug. 8) founded the Order of Preachers, popularly known as Dominicans. His emphasis on sanctification through study and on elective government are his special contributions to religious life. He is patron saint of astronomers and of the Dominican Republic.

St. Clare of Assisi (Aug. 11), founder of the Poor Clares, was a close associate of St. Francis of Assisi. She saw to it that her sisters were faithful to the Franciscan spirit of poverty and simplicity of life. She is patron saint of television, which is more likely to surprise her than us.

The summer calendar also includes some of the church's greatest theologians. St. Bonaventure (July 15) was the Franciscan contemporary of the Dominican Thomas Aquinas. Both died in 1274. Bonaventure is known as the Seraphic Doctor because of the deeply spiritual character of his theology.

St. Alphonsus Liguori (Aug. 1) belongs in two categories: he is founder

of the Redemptorists and is generally regarded as the greatest moral theologian of all time. Despite his own proclivity to scruples, he fought moral rigidity all of his life and emphasized the importance of compassion in confessional practice. Appropriately, he is patron saint of confessors, as well as of theologians and of vocations.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (Aug. 20), one of the Cistercian order's founding geniuses, was also one of the most influential of the church's theologians of spirituality.

Alongside Thomas Aquinas, no theologian looms larger in the church's entire history than St. Augustine of Hippo (Aug. 28), who also helped shape the development of monasticism through the Rule of St. Augustine.

Gregory the Great (Sept. 3) was one of the church's finest popes (590-604). His writings on pastoral care and preaching were enormously influential in the Middle Ages. Because of his link with Gregorian chant, he is patron of musicians and singers, as well as of teachers.

Space doesn't permit more than a mention of other summer saints such as Irenaeus, Joachim and Anne, Martha, John Vianney, Lawrence, Monica, Peter Claver, John Chrysostom.

But special honor is due St. Mary Magdalene (July 22), the Lord's close friend, who, centuries before any advocacy of women's ordination, fulfilled the one essential requirement for an apostle. She was a witness of the resurrection.

Don't wait to respond to God's call

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 9:51-62; (R1) 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21; (R2) Galatians 5:1, 13-18.

One word central to Sunday's readings is disciple, which comes from the Latin word *discipulus* meaning "to learn." A disciple is one who learns to be able to spread another's doctrine. Disciples sat at their master's feet, memorized his teachings and later taught them.

Christian discipleship is radically different because it is following Christ, the imitation of Christ.

Discipleship begins with a call. Elijah called Elisha; and Jesus called a young man to "Come follow me."

A call demands a response. If I call you on the phone, I expect that you will answer me.

Jesus expects everyone who responds to His call to be aware of three things.

First, He expects His disciples to know that following Him demands sacrifice. Jesus was honest. Like Churchill, who promised England when he became prime minister during World War II "blood and sweat and tears," Jesus said that to be His disciple one must take up the cross daily. He did



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

not promise security, a home — "the foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." What He did promise was that He would be with His disciples through it all. Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him there is nothing we cannot do.

Secondly, Jesus wants His disciples to be aware that His invitation is urgent, meaning that it demands an immediate response. The man Jesus invited to follow Him said, "Let me bury my father first;" that is, "Let me wait

till my father dies." That could have taken years. The inheritance, the obligations following upon assuming his father's role could well have smothered his vocation.

When Elisha asked Elijah for permission to go back to his father and mother, it was only to kiss them goodbye — not to wait until they had died. The break was immediate.

We must never dillydally with God's graces. As Augustine said, "I do not fear the coming of the Lord; but only that He might not come this way again."

Jesus says, "Go to confession, now!" We say, "Tomorrow, Lord." Tomorrow never comes.

Jesus says, "Give up your excessive drinking." We say, "Tomorrow, Lord." Tomorrow never comes.

Jesus says, "Break up this sinful relationship." We say, "Tomorrow, Lord." Tomorrow never comes. St. Paul says, "Now is the acceptable time!"

The third thing Jesus wants His disciples to do is to focus on the future. If one puts his hand to the plow and keeps looking back, he'll never plow a straight furrow. Elisha burned his plowing equipment; he made a clean break with his past. So Jesus says, "Don't use a rear-view mirror of life."

St. Paul learned that lesson, for he forgot the past, strained forward to what lay ahead, and continued his pursuit toward the goal (Phil 3:13-14).

When the time came for Jesus to suffer and die, "He firmly resolved to proceed toward Jerusalem." In fact He was so determined to get there to suffer and die for us that He took a shortcut through Samaria.

Jesus wants His disciples to be able to carry the cross. He wants them to respond immediately to each of His graces. And He wants them to focus firmly and fixedly on life's goal, to forget the past, and to embrace the present: the now-moment.

The story of Tom Monaghan, founder and owner of Domino's Pizza Inc., seems to me to be the story of a true disciple of Christ. He is about 57 years old, and worth more than \$480 million. He had a tough childhood, but a staunch faith. He goes to daily Mass, fasts on Fridays, meditates 22 minutes and says three rosaries each day. He claims that for 20 continuous years he has not thought, said or done anything that qualifies as a mortal sin.

A columnist of the *Detroit Free Press* said, "Wow, I don't think the pope would make that claim." Said Monaghan, "What I care about most is religion and to be a good Catholic."

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