

## Congar suffered at hands of Vatican

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

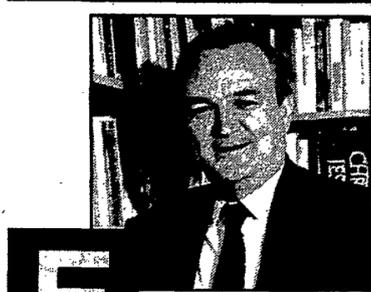
Cardinal Yves Congar died in Paris on June 22. It was only last November that he had been named to the College of Cardinals at age 90.

His contemporaries in the 1940s and 1950s would have been astonished by the appointment. They would have expected this great Dominican theologian more likely to have been defrocked or excommunicated than given the red hat.

In the spring of 1942 Yves Congar, a medical orderly in the French army, was a prisoner of war. A starved messenger brought the news that Father M.D. Chenu, the guiding spirit of the Saulchoir, the renowned Dominican house of study near Paris, had been censured by the Vatican for a book he had written on the nature of theology. Other scholars were also "swallowed up in the earthquake."

"Only because of my captivity and removal from the scene was I relatively unscathed," Congar later wrote in 1956. "But the land to which I belonged was shaken. The trembling was to continue for long years, and we were to work in a climate of scorn from which we have not yet entirely emerged."

The war ended in 1945, and Congar returned home. "Anyone who did not live through the years 1946-47 in French Catholicism," he would write, "has missed one of the most beautiful



### ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

moments in the life of the Church."

Among the developments to which Congar referred were the renewal of biblical studies, the liturgical movement, the priest/worker movement, a new sense of Christian community, and a more pastorally grounded theology. But "the beautiful moment" would quickly pass.

In 1947 he made a rough draft of a book on church reform. The book, which eventually was published in 1950, would "cost (him) much in personal anxiety," he noted. Rumors from Rome had surfaced as early as November, 1946, that any work that Congar would undertake from that point on "would be menaced."

"From the beginning of 1947 until

the end of 1956," Congar reflected, "I have known only an unbroken series of denunciations, warnings, restrictions discriminatory measures, and scornful delations." ("Delation" is a pre-Vatican II term referring to a secret, accusatory report to Rome regarding the work of a theologian or biblical scholar.)

Congar's first major work, "Divided Christendom," a ground-breaking ecumenical volume published in 1937, was still being scrutinized by Vatican authorities. Various chapters of another book, "The Mystery of the Church" (1941), also were met with disapproval.

In August, 1948, he completed a revised edition of "Divided Christendom." The master general of the Dominican order asked him to submit the manuscript to censors so that the master general could better defend Congar.

But the master general kept the manuscript for nearly two years, despite a number of urgent letters Congar wrote to him. On the eventual return of the manuscript, Congar was told that one of the censors wanted changes, but not which changes those were. When Congar gave up the project in frustration, it was said in Rome that it was Congar who made the decision, not the Vatican.

In 1948 Congar and others were invited to participate as Catholic observers at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Amsterdam. The Vatican refused to grant them permission because they were regarded,

Congar said, as "more or less suspect representatives of the Catholic Church."

After the publication of his book on church reform in 1950, everything Congar wrote, even the smallest book review, had to be submitted to Rome. Then in February, 1953, he and other Dominican theologians were expelled by order of Rome from their academic posts. Congar was sent to Jerusalem where he wrote "The Mystery of the Temple," a book that took seven censors three years to approve for publication.

In 1954 Congar was called to Rome and given a new assignment to Cambridge, England, where his scholarly and ecumenical activities were to be severely restricted. He was particularly warned about contacts with Anglicans.

With the election of John XXIII in 1958, however, the atmosphere in the Catholic Church changed dramatically. Congar would be appointed a *peritus* (expert) at the Second Vatican Council, where he exercised a profound influence on the shaping of its documents. Indeed, the council was largely a vindication of Congar's theology.

Unfortunately, this phase of Congar's life is unknown or has been forgotten. What is worse: Some may even be attempting now to use Congar's name and portions of his theology to legitimize and promote pre-Vatican II ideas on the church and on seminary education.

## Christians must bear crosses to crucify sin

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 14:25-33; (R1) Wisdom 9:13-18; (R2) Philemon 9-10, 12-17.**

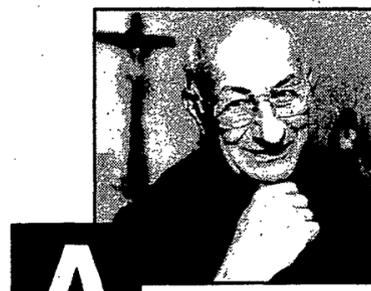
While Jesus was journeying toward Jerusalem, people thought He was going there to establish His kingdom. Everyone wanted to board the glory train, so Jesus told them in vivid language that those who would follow Him must realize three things (R3).

First, to follow Him meant being ready to suffer as on a cross. "Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

When Jesus came to earth, He did not come to take away pain and suffering. In fact, He implied suffering would be the hallmark of His disciples, for the servant is not greater than the Master.

Jesus' cross came at the end of His life. So, too, our greatest crosses often come at the end of our lives. When Jesus suffered on the cross, it was the most fruitful period of His life. Likewise, suffering at the end of our lives can be our most-productive period — if we learn to accept the suffering as Jesus did His.

Suffering at the end of one's life is often God's last chance for a person to make up for past sins and to shorten one's purgatory. Remember this: a lit-



### A WORD FOR SUNDAY

tle suffered now when we have free will is worth more than years of frightful suffering in purgatory. For after death we lose our free will and so cannot merit, for the night has come when no man can work.

St. Catherine of Siena said by sin we contract a debt of a million dollars; we can pay that debt now with a penny — by accepting our daily crosses as Jesus did His. Or we can wait till after death and pay the entire million by the terrible sufferings of purgatory.

What a diabolical thing euthanasia is — imposing death to shorten one's sufferings! Diabolical, for it deprives a

### Weekly Readings

**Monday, Sept. 11**  
Col 1:24-2:3; Lu 6:6-11

**Tuesday, Sept. 12**  
Col 2:6-15; Lk 6:12-19

**Wednesday, Sept. 13**  
Col 3:1-11; Lk 6:20-26

**Thursday, Sept. 14**  
Nm 21:4-9; Phil 2:6-11; Jn 3:13-17

**Friday, Sept. 15**  
Heb 5:7-9; Jn 19:25-27 or Lk 5:1-11

**Saturday, Sept. 16**  
1 Tm 1:15-17; Lk 6:43-49

it is like plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand. Yet it must be done. The true follower of Christ lets nothing stand between himself and following Christ — he doesn't count the cost. And it takes time and effort to become holy.

*One step won't take you very far;*

*You've got to keep on walking.*

*One word won't tell folks who you are;*

*You've got to keep on talking.*

*One inch won't make you very tall;*

*You've got to keep on growing.*

*One deed won't do it all;*

*You've got to keep on going.*

The word "triumph" is just "umph" added to the word "try." The saint is the sinner who keeps on trying.

Lastly, following Christ is a spiritual combat. It is like a king marching against another king. We are kings by baptism — "a kingly people." The enemy king is Satan. As he assailed Jesus at the beginning of His public life and all throughout, as he does us. We must never underestimate the enemy. He is a fallen angel — a seraphim no less. We are no match for him. That is why God has assigned a guardian angel to each one of us.

So, to follow Christ successfully, we must embrace the cross, persevere in the struggle, and use supernatural weaponry: prayer to our guardian angel, the rosary daily, confession monthly, Sunday Mass and Communion.

person of using an opportunity given by God to purify oneself as gold is purified by the fire and to shorten one's purgatory or escape it altogether.

Secondly, our Lord said that following Him is like building a tower. To build a tower in a vineyard is both costly and a long operation. When I visited the Holy Land, I climbed one of these vineyard towers: it was three stories high. The top story was a lookout, like a belvedere; the second story was the room where the vinekeeper lodged; and the bottom floor was the tool shed.

It costs to follow Christ and it takes time. Sin can cling to us. Getting rid of

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Monday-Wednesday by chance or appt.