

COLUMNISTS

Review of Pope coverage: Lavishly positive

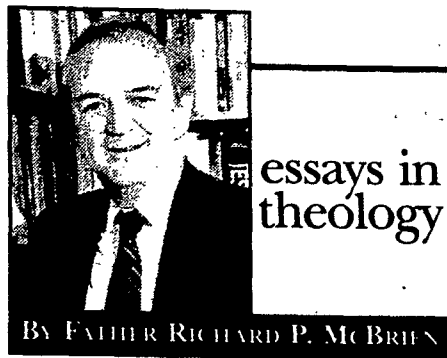
Over the years I have received occasional letters and postcards complaining about a quotation or comment attributed to me in the *New York Times*. Not content to disagree with the point of view expressed, the critics would also denounce the newspaper itself as a disreputable, anti-Catholic publication.

Given the fact that the *New York Times* is probably the most distinguished and widely respected newspaper in the world, such a characterization always seemed to me to border on the absurd.

But now that Pope John Paul II has completed his visit to the United States and to the New York area in particular, one can take an overall look at how the allegedly anti-Catholic *New York Times* covered the trip.

For any fair-minded observer who actually read the *Times* immediately before, during, and after the papal visit the coverage could only be described as positively lavish and lavishly positive.

Even with the distraction of the verdict in the O. J. Simpson trial, the *Times* accorded front-page attention to just about everything the pope said and did. In addition to the ample news stories, numerous photos, and generous excerpts from the pope's various speeches, there was a rich abundance of side-bar pieces, describing the expectations and reactions of ordinary Catholic families in different parts of the New York and New Jersey area.



essays in theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

The *Times* showed no inclination to churn the usual controverted issues — ordination of women, clerical celibacy and the priest shortage, birth control, even abortion. The reason is that the pope himself didn't make these issues central to his talks, and when he did make reference to them, he did so in a generally non-polemical manner. The *Times* itself reported on his remarks in kind.

His talk to the seminarians at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, for example, carried headlines and captions like: "Some Encouraging Words for Church's Seminarians" and "The Pope beseeches his future priests to have the 'courage to follow Christ.'" An effusive diocesan newspaper couldn't have done better.

To be sure, the paper acknowledged in the body of the articles what everyone knows to be the case: There is a severe shortage of priests and of vocations to the priesthood and the shortage is get-

ting worse, not better, in the United States. It also reported on the growing gap, reflected in the polls, between many of the laity and the hierarchy.

But the polls also show — and the *Times* reported this, too — that Catholics like the priests they have. About two-thirds say that priests are in touch with the needs of Catholics.

The analysis essays by religion writer Peter Steinfelds and correspondent Gustav Niebuhr were similarly balanced. Niebuhr in particular picked up on the pope's essentially progressive emphasis on international responsibility (in the United Nations speech) and on immigration and the poor (in the Giants Stadium and other speeches).

"The Pope's broad message this week, drawn heavily from Scripture and Catholic tradition," Niebuhr wrote, "portrays a man ultimately very difficult to define in terms of American ideologies, despite his well-known and unwavering support for traditional moral teachings and his unflinching refusal to consider anyone other than celibate males for ordination to the priesthood."

If there was a serious lapse in the *Times'* coverage of the papal visit to the New York area, however, it may have been in the matter of translation.

In the excerpts of Pope John Paul II's homily at Aqueduct Race Track in Queens, the pope is reported to have given voice unwittingly to one of the

most famous heresies in the history of the church.

At the beginning of the fourth century, a divisive controversy developed over a central tenet of Catholic faith: the divinity of Jesus Christ. How could the church divinize Christ without creating a second God?

Arius, a priest of Alexandria, proposed a solution. Jesus is not equal to God, but he is the greatest of creatures. In response, the Council of Nicea in 325 taught that Jesus Christ is "of the same substance" as God the Father. "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God," the Nicene Creed proclaims.

But the controversy didn't end there. A century later, Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, opposed the use of the title, "God-bearer" or "Mother of God" for Mary, on the ground that she is the mother of the human person only, not of the divine person.

Against Nestorianism, the Council of Ephesus in 431 taught that in Jesus Christ there are not two persons, one human and one divine, but only one divine person. Therefore, Mary is truly the Mother of God.

When the *New York Times* quoted Pope John Paul II as saying that Jesus Christ "entered the world's history — our history — as a man; a human person, a divine person," surely they must have got it wrong. Surely.

Changed by the touch of Christ

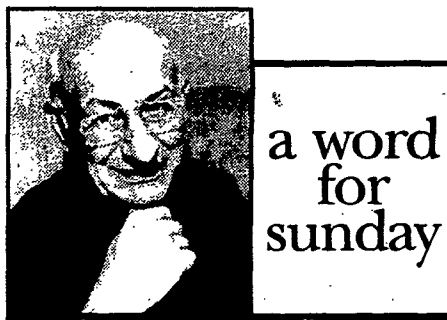
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 19:1-10. (R1) Wisdom 11:22-12:1. (R2) 2 Thess 1:11-2:2.

Have you ever wondered how to tell if someone has truly committed his or her life to Christ? There are so many misled today. How can you tell genuine faith? Jesus gave us a simple formula: "You can know a tree by its fruits." A good tree can't bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Sunday's Gospel is about a little man, Zacchaeus. Consider his conversion.

First, he was determined to see Jesus. Somehow, he wanted Jesus in his life. A chief tax-collector doesn't shimmy up a sycamore unless he's desperate. Zacchaeus did. He was a runt, but he was determined to see Jesus. He threw everything to the winds — his dignity, what people might think. He wanted to see Jesus. That was the first step in his conversion — an ardent desire to see Jesus. His determination was rewarded. Jesus spotted him up in the tree. He even knew his name. He called to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. I mean to stay at your house today."

The crowd murmured. The self-right-



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

eous squirmed. But Jesus knew Zacchaeus was searching and was deadly serious. That is all Jesus looks for in the human heart — a wanting to lead a new life.

Secondly, Zacchaeus showed his sincerity because he was willing to change his lifestyle. Orice a man had a small drugstore. He hated his work. He spent his mornings looking for something better and his afternoons at the ball park. Then one day he decided that this was foolish: to leave a business about which he knew something for one about which he knew nothing. So he decided to make the best of what he had. He started to build up his business by giving the best

service possible.

When a customer nearby would call in an order, he would repeat each item being ordered and his assistant would fill the order. With the order filled, the owner would keep the customer on the line while the delivery boy dashed out of the store and reached the customer's house before she got off the phone. Naturally, she expressed great surprise at the quickness with which the order was delivered.

News got around about how promptly the drugstore filled orders and soon Charles R. Walgreen, founder of the great Walgreen drugstore empire, had more business than he could handle.

Walgreen saw that since he could not change his situation, he would change himself. Zacchaeus realized the same thing. He was determined to see Jesus, but he was also willing to change.

Finally, Zacchaeus was willing to make the change that was needed in his life to follow Jesus. He said: "Lord, I give half my belongings to the poor. If I have defrauded anyone in the least, I pay him back fourfold."

See the effect Jesus can have on peo-

ple. He can make the greedy, generous. He can make the weak, strong. He can make the resentful, kind. His touch can work miracles where people are searching and are willing to change.

Sometimes a person only blossoms out, only shows his hidden strengths, his hidden gifts, after another person shows a little love, a little concern, a little caring.

Daily Readings

- Monday, Nov. 6**
Rom 11:29-36; Lk 14:12-14
- Tuesday, Nov. 7**
Rom 12:5-16; Lk 14:15-24
- Wednesday, Nov. 8**
2 Rom 13:8-10; Lk 14:25-33
- Thursday, Nov. 9**
2 Chr 5:6-10, 13-6:2 or Mc 4:52-59;
Heb 12:18-19, 22-24; Jn 4:19-24
- Friday, Nov. 10**
Rom 15:14-21; Lk 16:1-8
- Saturday, Nov. 11**
Rom 16:3-9, 16, 22-27; Lk 16:9-15

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MORE MYTHS ABOUT McQUAID JESUIT

MYTH # 3
You have to be a genius to attend McQuaid Jesuit.

McQuaid Jesuit provides the atmosphere in which all students can reach their potential. Our program provides an advanced challenge to the high achiever, and remedial help to the student requiring it. And each year, our students are accepted into the best colleges and universities, usually with generous grants and scholarships!

The McQuaid Jesuit student body is wonderfully diverse! More than 11% of our students are minority. Almost one quarter of our students come from outside the Catholic faith. And McQuaid Jesuit students come from public and private schools throughout 33 different districts and across five counties of Western New York.

MYTH # 4
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