

# COLUMNISTS

## Revised 'Catholicism' has drawn praise

Since the U.S. Catholic bishops' committee on doctrine has released a review of the completely revised and updated edition of my *Catholicism* book (Harper-Collins, 1994), and since this review has now been published in "Origins" (4/18/96) and been referred to in various news stories in both the Catholic and secular press, I am using this week's column and the next to call attention to other reviews of the new edition that have appeared since its publication two years ago.

Although the review was released on the authority of the bishops' Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices, the review was not prepared by the five bishops on the doctrine committee but by their staff, which means, for all practical purposes, by one author, Father Joseph A. DiNoia, OP.

The original edition of *Catholicism*, published in 1980, received a Christopher Award. Last year the new edition received a first-place award from the Catholic Press Association for the best "popular presentation of the Catholic faith."

The citation reads: "McBrien has performed a wonderful service for all Catholics by completely revising and updating his 1980 book on Catholicism. By beginning each topic with the Bible and developing it historically, the author leads the reader to a fuller understanding of Catholicism and its continuing process



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

### essays in theology

of development. A sincere reader cannot help but come away with a deeper appreciation of the beauty of the Catholic faith. The format of the book makes the reading of it a delight. The chapter summaries and discussion questions make it ideal as a teaching tool. This outstanding book is a 'MUST' for all Catholics!"

Gerald O'Collins, SJ, longtime professor and former dean of theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, calls the new edition "a rich and rewarding book ... from an outstanding theologian and communicator," noting that my book and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "complement each other splendidly" (*The Tablet*, 10/15/94). In his jacket endorsement of the book, Father O'Collins describes it as "the clearest and most competent guide in the English language to the Catholic Church's origins, teaching, traditions, and developments."

Father Dermot Lane, former head of

the Irish Theological Association and the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin, refers to the new edition as "very impressive." He writes that he "knows of no other book that contains such a comprehensive range of material in one place on the meaning and identity of Catholicism today." He recommends it as a text "for students of theology, for lay people who need to know what is happening in Catholic theology, for the busy priest who needs to keep abreast, and for religious educators who want to communicate content in their teaching" (*Link-Up, A Journal for the Dublin Archdiocese*, November 1994).

Australian theologian Father Andrew Hamilton, SJ, characterizes the book as a "middle-ground, modern and thoroughly Catholic theological compendium."

"Indeed," he continues, "it is hard to imagine anything which might rival it for completeness and clarity." He refers to my theology as "uncontroversial" and fully in keeping with the Second Vatican Council, but he concedes that some readers "might prefer a theology with a more radical edge" (*Kairos*, 7/14/94).

Calling the new edition "a better work for having been revised," another Australian theologian, Michael Putney, notes, "His first work served the Australian Church well for a decade. His new version of *Catholicism* deserves to be welcomed with the same expectation."

"Scholars like Richard McBrien and

Raymond Brown would never be considered by their colleagues as belonging to the radical fringe of either left or right. They are dedicated to teaching the Catholic tradition in its fullness and this is obvious in their work" (*The Brisbane Leader*, 7/24/94). Michael Putney has since been named a bishop.

Father Tony Kelly, president of Melbourne's Yarra Theological Union, compares the book favorably to the new catechism. "It is a pity," he writes, that "the Catechism did not profit from McBrien's outstanding organization and expository skills — to say nothing of his unintrusive use of standard 'inclusive language.' ... All in all, ... a boon for teacher and student, and a valuable resource for clergy" (*The Weekend Review*, 7/23/94).

Professor Paul Lakeland of Fairfield University calls it "an invaluable sourcebook on the Catholic theological tradition, above all for those who are not professional theologians, though they too will find matter of interest." (The bishops' committee had said just the opposite: It may be suited for theologians, but not for the non-professional.) He continues, "McBrien's claim that his approach is one of mediating theology, demonstrating the essential unity of the pre- and post-Vatican II Catholic church, is well-founded" (*Religious Studies Review*, April 1995).

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Jesus did not leave us as orphans

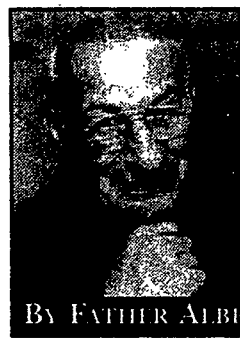
**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) John 14:15-21, (R1) Acts 8:5-8, 14-17, (R2) 1 Peter 3:15-18.

This Sunday is Mother's Day. Our Lord's words: "I will not leave you orphans" sounds like a good Mother's Day text.

A survey asked boys who they would be most likely to confide in if they had a problem. About 23 percent said their father. The remaining 77 percent said they would confide in their mother. Dads are wonderful comforters, but in most cases we think of mom as the comforter. God, too, like a mother, comforts his children.

The first way he does this is by his presence. "I will not leave you orphans." Jesus is going away. But he will send a comforter — the Holy Spirit. No greater gift can be given to those we love than that of one's presence. Nothing says "I love you" like being there. Being there for our parents; being there for our children.

Years ago, there was a country-western song titled, "Roses for Mama." In the song it is Mother's Day, and a man goes to a florist shop to buy his mother a bouquet. He knows he should visit his mother, but he has more exciting plans, so he decides to send her flowers instead. At the florist shop, the man



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

### a word for sunday

meets a little boy who wants to buy some roses for his mother, but he doesn't have enough money. The man gives the boy some money, then buys his mother's bouquet.

As the man drives away from the florist shop, he happens to pass by a cemetery. Glancing in the cemetery, he sees the little boy kneeling on a grave, a bouquet of roses in his hand. The man pulls into the cemetery and asks the boy what he's doing. The boy explains that his mother has been dead a year, and that he comes there all the time to talk to her and, on this special day, to give her flowers.

The man turns around and drives back to the florist. There, he asks if his mother's flowers have been delivered

yet. When the florist tells him no, the man cancels the delivery and takes them to his mother himself.

There is nothing that says "I love you" like simply being there. Children need parents who are there for them, both mother and father. Aging parents need children who will come to see them. Jesus in leaving his disciples wants them to know that he is not forsaking them. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."

Jesus comforts his disciples a second way: with his understanding and love. Presence is wonderful, but not enough. We need understanding and love. And here Jesus shines. No one is more understanding than Jesus. He holds the little children in his arms; he heals the sick; raises the dead, forgives the sinners — Magdalene, the good thief. And here's the Good News: He and the Father are one. God the Father is just like Jesus. The Spirit will comfort us, just as Jesus would were he still walking the earth.

But even besides his presence, his understanding, Jesus gives us the power to conquer our problems. "Because I live, you will live." Because he is with us, we can cope, we can endure, we can conquer.

A parent who is there is wonderful.

A parent who understands is even better. But best of all is the parent who prepares us for life by giving us the moral and spiritual values that make life worth living.

We honor mothers this Sunday. But more important, we must honor God who like a loving parent is ever present, ever understanding and ever helping us to overcome our problems. Because God lives, we can live!

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming, N.Y.

### Daily Readings

**Monday, May 13**

Acts 16:11-15; John 15:26-16:4

**Tuesday, May 14**

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15:9-17

**Wednesday, May 15**

Acts 17:15, 22-18:1; John 16:12-15

**Thursday, May 16**

Acts 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:17-23;

Matthew 28:16-20

**Friday, May 17**

Acts 18:9-18; John 16:20-23

**Saturday, May 18**

Acts 18:23-28; John 16:23-28

### Kid's Answer

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Go and preach the gospel

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