

# COLUMNISTS

## Good teaching involves give-and-take

Although the New Testament forged no unbreakable link between the episcopal office and the ministry of teaching (indeed, the ministries of "oversight" and "teaching" were distinct), the pastoral responsibilities of bishops, from the earliest centuries, have included teaching.

Undoubtedly, most bishops today take their teaching role seriously. Some, however, seem to exaggerate to the point of distortion. One is tempted to say that those who exaggerate it the most have the least experience with good teaching and the least understanding of modern methods of teaching.

For many bishops of my generation, the only model of teaching to which they were exposed in the seminary or in the pontifical universities of Rome was that of the formal lecture.

To be sure, lectures can be enlightening and sometimes even exciting. But many are as dry as dust, particularly when the lecturer is simply regurgitating another's thoughts.

While the lecture system of teaching is by no means out of date, particularly in large-class settings, the day of simply reading page after page of lecture notes, with no feedback at all from the students, is over.

Because learning is not simply the passive reception of information passed



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

from one individual to others, the only really effective form of teaching is one in which the students are invited to participate actively in the learning process. It is a lively dialogue about issues of concern to both teacher and students, and to the wider human community as well.

This method of teaching places greater burdens on students and teachers than the more traditional method. Students can't simply show up for class and take a seat. They prepare for class by doing a variety of readings and occasional brief papers, and they come ready not only to ask questions but to be questioned.

But neither can the teacher simply show up, yellowed notes tucked under the arm or in the briefcase. Teaching is more than reading from an authoritative text. It demands an intellectually active en-

agement with sources and with the questions and issues that underlie the sources. Fundamentalism doesn't work here. Neither does pious paraphrase.

This means that teachers not only have to know their texts, but also all the relevant commentaries on them. And they must be prepared for the questions that their students will pose from the floor. Sometimes even challenging questions. In other words, teachers must be able to explain and defend their teachings.

In this teaching-and-learning transaction the weakest argument is always the argument from authority: "This is true because so-and-so has said it." The question is why did so-and-so say it, and on what basis did he (or she) say it?

Teachers who think such questions disrespectful have no business in the classroom. The measure of good teaching is its capacity to stimulate the students' thinking, to provoke their questioning, and to create an environment where students feel free to disagree with their teachers.

Teachers today cannot assume, much less demand, the respect of their students. Respect is not conferred; like trust, it must be earned. Students have to be satisfied that their teacher is not someone who thinks that he (or she) already has all the answers, but rather treads the un-

certain path of inquiry alongside themselves.

That doesn't mean that the teachers aren't expected to know any more than their students. But it does mean that teachers themselves must be open to continued learning, be willing to acknowledge their own mistakes, and be secure enough to welcome objections without becoming defensive or punitive.

In the old system, teachers graded students. In the modern system, students also grade their teachers. The form of teaching described above as a rule didn't occur in most Catholic seminaries in the 1950s. And it probably doesn't occur in some seminaries even today.

It surely did not happen in the Roman universities before Vatican II, where no questions were ever asked from the floor. The professor simply divested himself of his prepared Latin lecture for the day and walked out.

To be sure, the teaching ministry of the church, whether exercised by bishops, priests, religious educators, parents, or theologians, is of the utmost importance. But such teaching, at whatever level, has to meet the standards of good teaching. And good teaching is not indoctrination.

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## Seek out the Eucharist's power

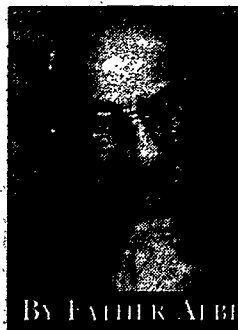
Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:51-58. (R1) Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16. (R2) 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

In the Dresden Art Gallery there is a triptych. The center panel is of Christ with bread in his hands and the words "This is my body." The panel to his right is a painting of Luther with the words, "This contains my body." The left panel portrays Calvin and the words, "This is a symbol of my body." Underneath the painting are the words, "Which of these three speak the truth?"

We know the answer well. When Jesus said, "This is my body," he meant just that! Yet on this feast of Corpus Christi, we might ask ourselves, "How present to us is the Christ of the Eucharist?" Is he as present to us as King Arthur was to his knights or Napoleon to his troops?

King Arthur was so present to his knights that they seemed to mirror him. "When he spake and cheer'd his Table Round with large, divine, and comfortable words," Bellicent reported to King Leodogran, "I beheld from eye to eye thro' all their Order flash a momentary likeness of the King."

Napoleon's troops fought to die for him. In Browning's poem, "Incident of the French Camp," a soldier dies with a smile



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

because he could report to Napoleon that Ratisbon was taken, the city the emperor so dearly wanted.

Yet present on our altars is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Does that presence stir us with a zeal to live, not necessarily die, for him? Why not?

Down South, there lived an old Protestant lady in a house that stood opposite a Catholic church. Every evening, she would sit on her front porch. Some evenings the church door would be opened for services, and she could look down the center aisle right to the altar.

One evening after these services a Catholic woman chanced by. The old lady asked her what was going on in church. The woman explained, "Bene-

diction of the Blessed Sacrament."

The old lady asked, "And what is that?" "It is God blessing us under the appearances of bread," the woman said.

"You mean," the old lady said, "that you believe that God himself is actually there? The same God who created heaven and earth? Do you really believe that?" "Yes, all Catholics do."

"If I believed that," the old lady mused, "nothing in the world would ever keep me away from the Blessed Sacrament. In fact, I'd crawl into the church on my hands and knees — if I believed that!"

That is the purpose of the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ — to stir up our faith, to rouse our hearts to realize, to appreciate the greatness of the reality present on our altars. Without this realization, our devotion to God in the Eucharist will be, or will become, just mechanical, routine, indifferent, mediocre.

In the material order, one dime equals 10 pennies. But this is not true in the spiritual order. One person of great faith is worth more than 10 of average faith. That is why the devil wishes to keep us mediocre.

The Curé of Ars, St. John Mary Vianney, waged a determined battle against the work of the devil in the world. Thousands

of people came to him each year for confession. The Curé of Ars said that he needed only three things: the altar, the confessional, and the pulpit. Of these three the really important thing was the altar.

A woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment and healing power went out from him. The same power issues forth from the Eucharist to all those who in faith "touch" it.

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### Daily Readings

- Monday, June 10  
1 Kings 17:1-6; Matthew 5:1-12
- Tuesday, June 11  
Acts 11:21-26; 13:1-3; Matthew 5:13-16
- Wednesday, June 12  
1 Kings 18:20-39; Matthew 5:17-19
- Thursday, June 13  
1 Kings 18:41-46; Matthew 5:20-26
- Friday, June 14  
Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 1 John 4:7-16
- Saturday, June 15  
1 Kings 19:19-21; Matthew 5:33-37

**Austria Spei**  
(Music of hope)  
presents  
**Silence in heaven**  
Music in the time of Henry VIII,  
and Mary, Queen of Scots  
with **Green Liggett**, guest soprano  
A Western European, Tye and Sheppard British and Scottish motets and  
songs by Tallis, Peebles, Dering and others.  
Thursday, June 13 at 8:00 P.M.  
Saint Anne Church  
1600 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester  
For more information, call 244-7764

CHORAL EVENING PRAYER &  
BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT FOR  
**THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY & BLOOD OF CHRIST**  
Sunday June 9th - 4:00 P.M.  
Saint Anne Church  
1600 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester  
Choral Music of Weelkes: *O Holy Banquet*; Tallis: *Magnificat*;  
Byrd: *Ave Verum*; Gregorian Chant: *Pange Lingua*;  
Hymn Tunes of Picardy: *Let all Mortal Flesh keep Silence*;  
Union Seminary: *Draw Us In the Spirit's Thether*;  
Grosser Gott: *Holy God*.  
Organ Music of Bach/Fox: *Arioso*; Mulet: *Tu Es Petra*.  
Thomas G. Donohue, *Choirmaster* Brink Bush, *Organist*

See what your friends are up to. **Catholic Courier**  
Check out the "On the Move" page.