

DIOCESAN NEWS

Columnist scorns conservative faction

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Church conservatives "lost" at the Second Vatican Council and have been trying to stem its reforms ever since, according to Father Richard McBrien, professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame and a syndicated columnist.

"It's almost like we still have to fight the battles of Vatican II," Father McBrien said in an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, where his column appears weekly.

Father McBrien spoke to the *Courier* prior to giving a speech to about 250 people Oct. 18, at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1100 S. Goodman St., where St. Bernard's Institute is located. SBI sponsored this talk.

He also spoke the evening before at Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford, in a talk sponsored by St. Bernard's on the Road.

Father McBrien noted that there was substantial opposition to Vatican II reforms in the Roman Curia, the church's administrative body.

"Many people in the Curia never accepted the defeat, and said 'Wait till the bishops go home,'" he said.

In his speech, Father McBrien explained that since Vatican II, a vocal minority — which he estimated at 10 to 15 percent of the church's membership — has allied itself with conservatives in the church's hierarchy to denounce not only liberal Catholics but even those who suggest dialogue among conservatives, moderates and liberals. That's because conservatives in the church don't want liberals to stay in it any longer, he said.

"Not only do they regard any position



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer
Father Richard McBrien shares his views with about 250 people at St. Bernard's Institute Oct. 18.

opposed to their own as error, but they want those who hold that position to get out of the church," he said of conservatives.

Pope John Paul II has exacerbated the problem by appointing conservative bishops, even, at times, against the wishes of a diocese's clergy and lay membership, Father McBrien said. He predicted the next pope, even if he is a conservative, would not be as ideologically oriented in his appointment of bishops.

"John Paul II, whatever his contributions to the church, and they are many, will not be replaced by another John Paul II," Father McBrien said. He added that many conservative papacies have been fol-

lowed by more liberal pontificates.

Father McBrien also spoke about reaction to Chicago Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's proposed "Common Ground Project," which the cardinal enunciated in a document titled "Called to Be Catholic: Church in a Time of Peril."

In addition to releasing the paper, Cardinal Bernardin announced the forming of an advisory committee for the project. Father McBrien said he believed conservatives were over-represented on the committee, while progressives and women were underrepresented. He added that he believed Cardinal Bernardin had deliberately sought substantial conservative representation on the committee in order to forestall criticism of the Common Ground project.

Yet, McBrien said, despite trying to fend off potential attacks on his efforts, Cardinal Bernardin was still attacked for his proposal. "Called to Be Catholic" drew immediate criticism from four U.S. church leaders — Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C., Cardinal Adam Maida of Detroit and Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, Father McBrien noted. Such criticism shows the futility of trying to please those who sharply disagree with you, the columnist said.

"You really should not try to do things to placate at all those who might not be happy," he said. He likened such attempts to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's failed attempts to placate Adolf Hitler.

He also pointed out that Cardinal John O'Connor of New York City had criticized a speech made by retired Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco at Oxford University last June. The archbishop's speech called for major reform of the Roman Curia and the church's method of appointing bishops. Archbishop Quinn had explained that he was responding to Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, on Christian unity. That document called for dialogue on how the of-

New Interfaith Alliance to sponsor public forum

The Rochester Chapter of the Interfaith Alliance will sponsor an inaugural public forum on "Pro-Family Politics: An Interfaith Exploration of Family Life and Political Agendas" Monday, Oct. 28, at Temple B'rith Kodesh, 2131 Elmwood Ave., Brighton.

The panel discussion from 7:30 to 9 p.m. will feature a family court judge (yet to be determined), the Rev. Dwight Cook of Rochester's Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, and Tabassam Javed, who is a clinical psychologist with the state Department of Mental Health and a member of the Islamic Center of Rochester.

Described as an alternate religious voice and agenda to that of the Religious Right, the alliance is a national movement to mobilize religious communities to bring their faith and morality to bear on public policy and electoral politics," according to a release.

The Rochester chapter's interim steering committee is headed by the Rev. Paul Gongloff, pastor of Christ View United Methodist Church in Henrietta. Members include Sister Barbara Moore, RSM. Further information is available from the Rochester Chapter of Christ View United Methodist Church, 174 Pinnacle Road, Rochester, NY 14623, phone 716/354-1180.

fice of the papacy was exercised.

Both the criticism of Cardinal Bernardin and Archbishop Quinn were unusual in that U.S. church leaders publicly and strongly criticized their brother bishops' statements, Father McBrien said. But he added that supporters of Cardinal Bernardin and Archbishop Quinn should welcome such criticism, for it gives them the freedom to air their differences with their opponents in the church.

"The cat's out of the bag now," he said during his interview. "No one can say it hurts the church if you bring disputes into the public forum. (The cardinals) have shown us the way."

Obituary

Sister Mary Bercana Metschl, 94

Sister Mary Bercana Metschl, a School Sister of Notre Dame who served St. Boniface Church in Rochester for 23 years, died Sept. 12, 1996. She was 94.

Born in Remolden, Germany, she made her profession in 1929 from her home parish in Ploppenburg, Germany.

Sister Metschl worked in food service for churches and a school in New Jersey and Maryland from 1928 until 1954,

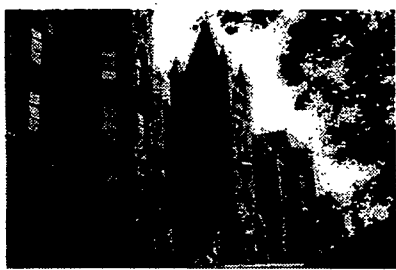
when she came to St. Boniface. She was a housekeeper for the Rochester church until 1977, and then moved to the motherhouse in Wilton, Conn., where she worked in community service.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Sept. 14 at the motherhouse chapel in Wilton. Interment was at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel, Conn. Donations may be made to the SSND Development Fund, 345 Belden Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897.

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