

# COLUMNISTS

## Censured theologians sometimes set course

It has frequently happened in history that individual theologians, or sometimes whole theological movements, meet with "disfavor" from one of the congregations in Rome. Ordinarily, theologians in these situations have been using a method of inquiry different from that which has been followed in the previous decades.

These cases have been resolved in various ways. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, took part in the theological controversies of his time; some of the views he held were condemned for a time. Later the method he advanced became the official basis for the way all theology was done, and he himself was canonized. Many theologians who were censured earlier in our own century became so well accepted by Rome at a later point that they provided the very foundation for Vatican II.

The first part of our own century saw many biblical theologians under scrutiny from Rome. Today it is in moral theology that the most publicized controversies have developed. Several theologians from the United States and Canada have come under censure from Rome because of some of the views that they hold regarding some aspect of moral theology.

The "penalty" exacted by Rome against these moral theologians is, actu-



the moral life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

ally, rather light. Their licenses to teach in a pontifical faculty (of which there are seven in the U.S.) may be withdrawn, or a particular book has its imprimatur withheld. To date, these moral theologians have not been told to stop teaching or writing; no one has been told not to read their books or hear their teachings.

At stake in these controversies involving moral theology is the question of what "method" or "set of questions" is being employed. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith pretty much uses the "scholastic" method. This method analyzes the moral life by "dissecting" it into parts; it provides a certain intellectual satisfaction by dividing up human capabilities and giving each one a built-in purpose and a kind of morality of its own.

Body and soul, intellect and will, ob-

jective and subjective, separate object, circumstances and intention of a single act, individual "human faculties" like reproduction or speech, all are given a kind of independence and considered apart from the rest of the body and apart from the totality of the human "embodied person" of which they are a part.

This method was used in every Catholic college and university classroom for decades, if not centuries. It "trickled down" into religious education textbooks for high schools and grammar schools, too.

Many people reading this column will be able to recall it easily, and even to "do" its kind of analysis. By dividing things up into individual components considered independently of the rest of the person, those employing the scholastic method are able to classify entire "classes of acts" as moral or immoral, apart from any mention of the context, circumstances or intentions of those performing them. Behaviors such as suicide, artificial contraception, masturbation, divorce were all able to be classified as evil apart from any other consideration because they contradict the purpose of an individual "faculty."

This method has much to commend it. It especially offers a kind of intellectual satisfaction that is immediate, clear

and consistent. It avoids any gray areas, any leftover questions, any "messiness" introduced because of extenuating circumstances or the fact that many actions produce some results that are good right along with some that are bad.

The difference between this method and that practiced by most moral theologians in the U.S. today is based in the recognition that we need to consider the relation of component parts to the whole living unity that is a concrete human action. For many people today, the overall moral analysis of an act cannot be adequate unless it links the individual parts of an act into an intelligible whole that includes not just the object of the act, but the intention of the one performing it; not just the act itself, but the outcomes that were anticipated; not just the biological goals of our human capabilities, but the emotional ones as well.

The controversies in moral theology today may eventually be "resolved" by attending to the differences in method that underlies them. It is possible that the censured theologians of today may, like some of their important predecessors, end up providing the foundation for the theology of tomorrow.

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## A good ship rides out storms

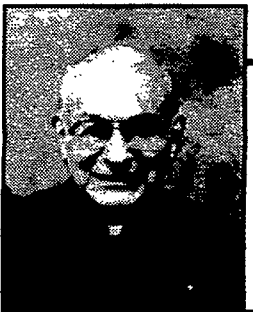
**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Mark 4:35-41. (R1) Job 38:1, 8-11. (R2) 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.

As evening drew near, Jesus and his disciples decided to cross the Sea of Galilee. The sea is 600 feet below sea level and wind coming down from the north can sweep up a gale in seconds. That's what happened that evening. The winds howled and the waves threatened to swamp their little boat. How violent must have been the storm when seasoned fishermen began to panic.

Jesus was in the stern fast asleep. How tired he must have been. The disciples awakened him and asked, "Doesn't it matter to you that we are going to drown?"

Everybody goes through storms at some time or another. Our storm may be a problem marriage. A grandmother celebrating her golden wedding anniversary told the secret of her long and happy marriage. "On my wedding day," she said, "I decided to make a list of 10 faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would overlook in my new husband."

A friend asked her to tell some of those faults. The grandmother replied, "To tell the truth, I never did get around to listing them. Whenever my husband did something, though, that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, 'Lucky for him that's one of the 10!'"



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

Some marriages do not make it through the storm, and the wreckage can be devastating. Especially for women and children. Marriage counselors who a decade ago were advising couples to go ahead and part are now recommending that couples hang in there and try to make it through the storm. Of course that is God's plan. And they will succeed, if like the Apostles they go to Jesus.

The loss of a loved one is also a terrible storm with devastating effects. One famous study, called "Broken Heart," researched the mortality rate of 4,500 widowers within six months of their wives' deaths. Compared with other men the same age, the widowers had a mortality rate 40 percent higher. How great is the storm of the loss of a loved one.

The worst part of the storms is that Jesus seems to be asleep. "Why doesn't he intervene?" we cry in distress. Charles Dickens asked the same question

through poor demented Barnaby Rudge. Bending over the form of a man who had fallen victim to highwaymen, Barnaby says, "See when I talk of eyes the stars come out! Whose eyes are they? If they are angels' eyes, why do they look down here and see good men hurt, and only wink and sparkle all the night?"

Where is God in my distress? Does he not care that we perish?

The story in Mark's Gospel is an affirmation. Yes, Jesus does care.

Linda Sledge recalls a day in her childhood that she will never forget. She was playing in the sand of a Hawaiian beach near where she lived, building towers with her red shovel and bucket. She had wandered away from her parents. Suddenly a great wave knocked her off her feet into the ocean. She managed to get up on her feet, but the sand was flowing out from under her feet. Then another wave struck, and she had no footing. She cried out for her parents. All she could see was the vast ocean ahead. She thought she was doomed. Just then two strong arms reached out from behind and pulled her to safety. "Don't be afraid," her father said. "I've been watching you all the time."

Those are Christ's words to us. He is not sleeping. He is watching over us. Why are we afraid? Have we no faith? Do we believe in a God who loves us and has promised never to forsake us? Do we be-

lieve that however dark the clouds may be, behind those clouds, the sun still shines? Do we believe that beyond every cross, there is an empty tomb? If we do, we can weather any storm, however severe.

A sea captain said he lived by the philosophy that if the sea is smooth, it will get rough, and if it is rough, it will get smooth. But with a good ship you can always ride it out. So can we with the ship of faith!

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

### Daily Readings

- Monday, June 23**  
Genesis 12:1-9; Matthew 7:1-5
- Tuesday, June 24**  
Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26;  
Luke 1:57-66, 80
- Wednesday, June 25**  
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18;  
Matthew 7:15-20
- Thursday, June 26**  
Genesis 16:1-12, 15-16 or 16:6-12, 15-16; Matthew 7:21-29
- Friday, June 27**  
Genesis 17:1, 9-10, 15-22;  
Matthew 8:1-4
- Saturday, June 28**  
Genesis 18:1-15, Matthew 8:5-17

## COURIER CLASSIFIEDS

### GENERAL

#### Announcements

**ADOPTIONS** The Catholic Courier does not publish adoption advertising. To obtain a list of agencies that serve birth mothers and adoptive parents, call 716-328-4340. Agencies wishing to be included on this list may send information to the Catholic Courier.

**CELEBRATE OCTOBER-FEST ON** a 14-day Fall Foliage Tour to Europe. Contact Giovina Carosico 315/789-2686.

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