

COLUMNISTS

Faith process lasts a lifetime

Christian faith is a virtue by which we freely accept God's self-communication in Jesus Christ. Catholic faith is simply Christian faith as embraced and lived out in the faith community known as the Catholic Church.

Since no one has seen God (John 1:18), we can only "believe in" God. And since no one, not even the Apostles, "saw" God in Jesus of Nazareth, we can only "believe in" Jesus as the Christ.

But that belief isn't a blind belief. We have reasons, both of the mind and of the heart, for believing in God and in Jesus Christ, and for shaping our lives in accordance with that belief.

We believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it helps us to explain and even to enrich our experience of ourselves, of others, of the world around us, and of human history itself. The Gospel leads us to a greater self-awareness as human persons, to a deeper union with others, to a more profound commitment to the needs of others, and to confidence and hope in the meaningfulness of life and the happy outcome of human history.

If Jesus Christ and his message of salvation did not do that for us, if they did not help us make sense of who we are and of our destiny, we would not have become Christian or have remained Christian — at least not a faith-filled, committed Christian.



essays in theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

Faith, however, is not a once-and-for-all gift from God, by which we have the "power" (Latin, "virtus") to believe in God and in Jesus as the Christ. Faith is a gift to be cultivated, nurtured, and increased like the talents in the Gospel story (Matthew 25:14-30).

The life of faith is a process. We move through various stages of faith development.

In the beginning, we have the faith of a very young child rooted in images and stories. Their authority is embodied in parents and other significant care-givers. Faith is more a matter of trust than of belief, much less of conviction.

Eventually, the growing child internalizes the rules by which the faith is to be lived. In years past, these rules (commandments, precepts) were committed to memory as if they could be applied to every conceivable situation one might encounter.

Gradually the young person of faith begins to establish some distance between himself or herself and the various mediators of faith (parents, catechists, teachers, clergy). A tension arises between the young person's desire for autonomy and self-expression, and the pull of conformity, both with the church and with the young person's peers.

At this stage of development, religious appeals that require obedience to authority become less and less effective, while the example and witness of authority-figures become increasingly important.

At the next stage, that is, of young adulthood, they move outside the family into the larger world of college or military service or the workplace. Here they encounter, sometimes for the first time, a wide variety of beliefs and non-belief. The young Christian adult is compelled to rethink previous beliefs as well as the system of moral conduct based on those beliefs.

Some fail to make that passage. They either cling rigidly and uncritically to the belief system inherited from family and church, or they reject everything outright. Neither is an intelligent and responsible way of dealing with pluralism and diversity.

Healthy persons of faith accept pluralism and diversity, and even learn from it. They rethink their beliefs, which

means they rethink their relationships with God, with Jesus Christ, and with the church. They disengage themselves from some aspects of those relationships, and strengthen and recommit themselves to others.

Faith is no longer something they "take on faith." They believe now out of growing personal conviction. And their moral conduct, based on faith, is no longer done out of fear of breaking rules and of suffering the consequences, but out of the conviction of conscience that this is the right thing (or the wrong thing) to do.

At the same time, mature (and maturing) persons of faith recognize and acknowledge the integrity and even the truth of traditions other than their own.

They affirm and live out their own faith commitments in such a way as to honor what is true in the lives of others, without denying the truth of their own.

Finally, they reach the highest, or generative, level of faith when they think always of others ("a faith that does justice"), when they make sacrifices, sometimes heroic sacrifices, for the sake of those of younger generations who will follow them in the faith.

Such faith comes from God and, in the end, leads back to God.

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

COURIER CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL	EMPLOYMENT	SERVICES	SERVICES	SERVICES	SERVICES
<p>Announcements</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Business Opportunities</p> <p>SELL AVON! EXCELLENT earnings. Ind. sales reps work from home. 716-546-6928 or 1-800-208-8998 PIN 7309.</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>DJ MUSIC FOR parties, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays. Call Joe at DiJames Tunes. 716-473-5411.</p>	<p>Help Wanted</p> <p>WANTED: LIVE-IN AIDE to care for elderly parents. Room and board plus salary. References. Phone 716-426-6740 for details.</p> <p>Help Wanted - Part Time</p> <p>PART-TIME OFFICE MANAGER/Administrative Assistant. Flexible business hours, \$8-9/hr. to plan, organize and coordinate the administrative operations of Corpus Christi Church's Rogers House. Responsibilities include record keeping, filing, telephone, clerical and organizational skills. Proficiency in computer is necessary. Please send resume to Jim Smith, 934 Culver Rd., Rochester, NY 14609 by 8/11/97.</p>	<p>Electricians</p> <p>NE NOLAN ELECTRIC FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS Serving Rochester & Surrounding Areas Licensed & Fully Insured 716-436-8290</p> <p>YAEGER ELECTRIC Residential • Commercial • Industrial Licensed Master Electricians • Trouble Shooting • Service Upgrade • Control Wiring • Commercial Maintenance (716)255-1886 • 147 Route 104, Ontario</p>	<p>Masonry</p> <p>AMERICAN MASONRY & CHIMNEY CHIMNEY SERVICE ALL MASONRY WORK 865-4170 663-7360</p> <p>Moving & Hauling</p> <p>K-D Moving & Storage, Inc. Experience in office, household moving and deliveries. Big or Small, We do them All! 473-6610/473-4357 23 Arlington St. Rochester NY 14607 NYDOT#9657</p>	<p>Painting & Wallcovering</p> <p>BURGMAS-TER PAINTING/PAPERHANGING, texture ceilings, walls, ceilings repaired, rugs shampooed. Insured, powerwashing. Dan Burgmaster, 716-663-0827.</p> <p>SPECIALIZING IN REPAIRS OF OLDER HOMES Basement walls repaired, painted & waterproofed. Interior/exterior painting, garages, porches, etc. Homes power washed, gutter cleaning, driveway sealing. Small jobs welcome. Senior Discount • Free Estimates. Certified • 20 Years Experience AL MEYVIS, JR. 323-2876 • 392-4435</p>	<p>Roofing Siding & Gutters</p> <p>ROOFING: High-tech roofing, flat & shingle, repair specialist, workmanship guaranteed. Ins. Call John (716) 259-3741.</p> <p>BOWMAN ROOFING & SIDING CO. Established 1912 George R. Bowman, Sr. • Roof Repairs • Siding • Replacement Windows • Seamless Aluminum Gutters • Gutter Cleaning • Ice Problems • 671-3270 671-2912</p>
<p>EMPLOYMENT</p> <p>Help Wanted</p> <p>CAREGIVER WANTED to care for two small children. My home, Greece area. Monday-Friday, 7:00 am to 5:30 pm. Non-smoker. Mature Christian female preferred. Own transportation. CPR required. Background check required. 716-723-9699.</p> <p>EARN MONEY READING books! \$30,000/yr. income potential. Details 800-513-4343, ext. Y-1467.</p> <p>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR for St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, Warsaw, NY and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Silver Springs, NY. To direct Religious Education of children of both parishes. Grade levels K-11. Applicant must have: personal commitment to Catholic faith, good people skills, organizational background, administrative abilities, related religious education experience preferred, pastoral certification desired. Salary: hourly wage. Send resume to: Director of Religious Education Search Committee, St. Michael's Rectory, 171 N. Main St., Warsaw, NY 14569.</p>	<p>MERCHANDISE</p> <p>Clothing</p> <p>CHRISTENING GOWNS with hat. Handmade, crocheted, ribbon embroidery, etc. Call Debora 716-323-1790.</p> <p>Wanted to Buy</p> <p>Furniture, Trunks, Clocks, Sterling and China, Linens. Wanted: complete estates and households. Sell to me for cash or I will conduct a sale for you. Marilyn's Antiques 716-647-2480</p>	<p>Financial Services</p> <p>BAD OR GOOD credit? Refinance. Cash out on residential and commercial mortgages. Jones Financial Service, 460 State St., Suite 208, Rochester, NY 14608. 716-325-1180. Registered mortgage broker. NYS Banking Dept. 3rd party provider.</p> <p>Heating & Air Conditioning</p> <p>Hicks Home Heating Call us for Summer Comfort! Heat & Air Conditioning Specialists • Sales • Service • Installation Family Owned & Operated 424-4848</p>	<p>Painting & Wallcovering</p> <p>PAINTING: NEAT, RELIABLE, experienced, quality work, many satisfied customers. Call John 716-544-0593.</p>	<p>Call 716-328-4340 to advertise in the Courier Classifieds</p>	
		<p>Home Improvement</p> <p>MASONRY REPAIR: brick steps, basements, patchwork. Reasonable. 35 yrs. exp. 716-323-1007. Al Meyvis, Sr.</p> <p>House Cleaning</p> <p>\$10 OFF HOUSE/window cleaning. Lawncare. Mickey's Cleaning Service. 716-527-9051 / Page 239-5607.</p> <p>POWERWASHING: DECKS, HOUSES, etc. 716-392-2171.</p>			
		<p>PROPERTY</p> <p>Apartments Unfurnished</p> <p>MIDTOWN MANOR APARTMENTS FOR AGE 50 AND OLDER Convenient Downtown Location. Walk to shopping. On a direct busline. Studios \$299; One bedroom \$359. All utilities included. Section 8 accepted. Monthly Mass Services 475 East Broad St. • 716-546-3650</p>			
			<p>TO ADVERTISE IN THE COURIER CLASSIFIEDS FILL OUT THE COUPON AND MAIL TO: Catholic Courier, PO Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624</p> <p>Ad Copy: _____</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City/State/Zip: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>Start Date: _____</p> <p><i>When we receive your ad, we will call with a price quote</i></p>		