

COLUMNISTS

Time is right for investing in God

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 10:17-30. (R1) Wisdom 7:7-11. (R2) Hebrews 4:12-13.

Suppose someone reputable made you the following offer: Come into business with me. First, get all the cash you can. Take a mortgage out on your house, cash in your life insurance policy, take the money out of your IRA account — however you can come up with cash, do it. Then, if you work hard, and follow me and give your very best, I promise you will get back 100 times whatever you invested. If you raise \$10,000, you will get back \$1 million. If you raise \$100,000 you will get back \$10 million. Would anybody turn a back on an opportunity like that?

Yet Jesus said there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property, for him and for the Gospel who will not receive in this present age and in the age to come a hundred times as much. That's some promise. Whatever you invest will be returned a hundredfold. Nobody could make such a promise except Christ. And he did it in a most interesting context.

A wealthy young man came to Jesus seeking everlasting life.

"Keep the commandments," Jesus told him.

"I have," said the young man, "since my childhood."



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

Jesus looked at him with love and said, "You lack one thing: Sell what you have and give to the poor; then come and follow me."

At these words, the man's face fell and he went away sad. Jesus said to his disciples, "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples were stunned at the harshness of this remark. Jesus reassured them, "With God all things are possible."

"We have put aside everything to follow you!" Peter responded.

It was at this point that Jesus made his hundredfold promise. The deal of a lifetime. But the rich young ruler turned it down. Why do you suppose he did that?

Perhaps all he could see was what he was giving up, not what he would be gaining. According to nationwide studies, the No. 1 goal of 53 percent of college graduates in 1980 was "being very

well-off financially." A decade later, that number jumped to 93 percent. In 1980, more than 65 percent of college graduates were concerned about a philosophy of life. Only 43 percent of the class of 1989 felt that a philosophy of life was important.

If these studies are correct, we have produced a nation of young money-grubbers. That is not good. If 93 percent value financial success above all else, what chance have they of entering the kingdom of God? They have their values all mixed up.

Once in catechism class, I gave each student a nickel. Then I offered to swap a dime for their nickels. Some wouldn't because the nickel was larger than the dime. Then I offered to give a dollar bill for the nickel. Again some refused because you can tear a dollar bill; the nickel is tougher and heavier. The rich man in the Gospel thought having wealth was better than having everlasting life.

The rich man overestimated the value of material possessions. Money is good — a good servant but a poor master. Once the god Dionysus offered King Midas whatever his heart desired. Without hesitation, King Midas exclaimed, "I wish that everything I touch be turned into gold." And so it was.

He picked up a stone, it turned into gold. He touched a leaf and it was gold. "Ah, I'll become the richest man in the

world and the happiest." He danced all the way home and asked his servants to prepare a banquet to celebrate his good fortune. But as the bread touched his tongue, it turned into gold; so did the wine; even when he reached out to his daughter for solace, she turned into gold. Midas cursed his gift and himself for his foolishness.

There is something more to life than riches. We keep a hundredfold only what we give away for Christ — our time, our service to others, our sharing with others. Be careful lest money distance us from God and from others.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, October 13
Romans 1:1-7; Luke 11:29-32
Tuesday, October 14
Romans 1:16-25; Luke 11:37-41
Wednesday, October 15
Romans 2:1-11; Luke 11:42-46
Thursday, October 16
Romans 3:21-29; Luke 11:47-54
Friday, October 17
Romans 4:1-8; Luke 12:1-7
Saturday, October 18
2 Timothy 4:1-17b; Luke 10:1-9

Consider the why of faith

In almost every instance in which the subject of religion is raised, the questions have to do with the content of a particular religious tradition rather than its foundations.

We ask, for example, what Catholics believe about the pope, purgatory, the Blessed Mother, confession, praying to saints, or the Mass.

We tend to focus more on what we believe than on why we believe. This is not something to deplore. Rather, it is in the nature of things. How could we, after all, maintain our psychic equilibrium if we arose every morning to confront anew the most basic questions of meaning?

Why are we on this earth? Do we have a destiny beyond death? Is there a God? How do we know of that God? How do we know if that God makes any difference in our lives and, if so, how does God communicate that fact to us?

There are times when the what question has to yield to the why question. For Catholics, it might be during a weekend retreat or parish mission. For most people, it occurs following the death of a loved one, or upon hearing the news that one's spouse or child has an incurable disease.

At such moments one tends to be more open to questions of ultimate meaning and of one's place in the divine scheme of things. To understand more clearly this



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

distinction between the what of religious faith and the why, an analogy might help. Imagine yourself in a house set high upon a mountainside. The house commands a breathtaking view of an immense valley, dotted with farms and homes and lakes.

What makes the view possible from inside the house? Windows, of course. A magnificent picture window does the job quite nicely.

But the window is only the means through which one takes in the scene. It is the scene, not the window, that rivets our attention.

Indeed, one would only notice the window if there were something wrong with it, for example, if it became thickly covered with grime or had been shattered by a falling tree limb. No longer possible to see through, the window would have to be thoroughly washed or the glass re-

placed. Once accomplished, the window itself would no longer be of any interest, only the view seen through it.

For most of its history the church's attention has been focused on the what of Christian faith (the view), not the why (the window). The why question surfaced intermittently, when there were direct challenges to the very possibility of faith, such as were raised in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Over the course of church history there have been two major approaches to the why question. The first, in the tradition of St. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), seeks the answer from within the human heart. The approach is sometimes called the way of illumination. "My heart is restless," St. Augustine wrote, "until it rests in Thee."

The second major approach is in the tradition of St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274). It is a more intellectual, analytical, and apologetical approach. It attempts to fashion arguments in support of the faith and to refute objections raised against the faith.

Since the early 20th century, however, there has been a growing tendency to combine the two approaches, drawing upon the strengths of each.

This middle position has been identified with the great French philosopher theologian Maurice Blondel (d. 1949) and with a school of Catholic philoso-

phers and theologians known as Transcendental Thomists. The late Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (d. 1984) was foremost among them.

According to this middle position, faith does not arise as a response to something coming out of the stars, so to speak, and then authenticated by the church. Neither does it spring solely from the wellsprings of the heart.

Revelation, or God's self disclosure, occurs in the ordinary experiences of life, outside and within alike.

For the Christian, Jesus Christ is the personification of that revelation and of God's benevolent intentions toward us. However, the Gospel is believable only if it actually helps us to explain and enrich the ordinary experiences of life: whether loving relationships, on the one hand, or tragic misfortunes, on the other.

In other words, we do not have faith because someone in authority or some book tells us to have faith. We have faith because it illuminates and gives deeper meaning to the ordinary experiences of life.

Even then, a faith that does not generate a life of generous service to others is not a living faith. In the end, the what and the why of faith must yield to the how.

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

HART MONUMENT COMPANY

Since 1856

Monuments, Markers and Cemetery Lettering

2301 Dewey Avenue (OPPOSITE HOLY SEPULCHRE CEMETERY)

(716) 865-6746

Pilgrimage to Italy

with local priest and deacon
April 18, 1998 • 8 days • escorted
Milan, Florence, Assisi, Rome • Audience with Pope John Paul II

Gardens of England

May 1998 • 8 days • escorted
from Rochester
Royal Horticultural in Wisley, Bath, Stratford-Warwick Castle, London

Ireland 3rd annual

May 29-June 7, 1998 • escorted
Blarney Castle, Ring Kerry, Killarney, Galway, Cliffs of Moher

Call for brochure

All Season's Travel & Cruise Center
61 Main St. • Brockport • 716-637-2119

Can we talk?

You enjoy reading the Catholic Courier — why not join our subscription sales team? Telemarketing positions are now available, with hours from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Call Jeanne at (716) 328-4340.



Kids' Answers

1. 12	4. 5,000
2. 150	5. 12
3. 40	6. 7



Holy Sepulchre Cemetery
2461 Lake Avenue, Rochester, NY 14612
716-458-4110