

I had been intending for months to read Cardinal Roger Mahony's pastoral letter on liturgical renewal in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. But one thing after another seemed to get in the way.

Not even Mother Angelica's reckless broadside against the cardinal — questioning his eucharistic orthodoxy — was sufficient to draw me into the relatively lengthy text. However, a recent story in the *National Catholic Reporter* finally pulled me across the line of resistance (Dec. 26/Jan. 2 double issue).

A self-styled liturgical watchdog group, calling itself Adoremus (Latin for "Let us adore"), has just issued a statement accusing the cardinal of having a "strikingly truncated theology of the Eucharist."

Make no mistake about it: Adoremus is not some fly-by-night outfit with a letterhead. Its executive committee includes such well-known Catholic activists as Father Joseph Fessio, SJ, and Helen Hull Hitchcock, spouse of James Hitchcock, professor of history at St. Louis University and a syndicated columnist.

Coupled with Mother Angelica's attack, the Adoremus critique suggests that certain elements of the U.S. Catholic Church have now formally shifted the focus of their collective ire from Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the late archbishop of Chicago,



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

go, to Cardinal Roger Mahony, the man whom Cardinal Bernardin selected to preside at his funeral more than a year ago.

For years Cardinal Bernardin bore the brunt of criticism from such individuals and organizations. Not even death itself immunized him from assault. Mrs. Hitchcock's husband delivered what some would regard as a calumnious attack on the late cardinal in a journal edited by Father Fessio ("Cardinal Bernardin's Legacy," *Catholic World Report*, February 1997).

Those who really knew Cardinal Bernardin, especially his brother bishops and the priests, religious and laity who worked with him in Chicago and before that in Cincinnati, found the attacks more laughable than appalling.

Few pastoral leaders seemed to have had a deeper or richer prayer life than

Joseph Bernardin, or been more thoroughly committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the church that proclaims it. And yet Cardinal Bernardin was often portrayed by these people as if he were a willing tool of the church's enemies, a man ready and even eager to sell the church and perhaps even the Redeemer himself down the river for the sake of a bit of favorable attention in the media.

As these judgmental folks scan the episcopal landscape today, they can find fewer mitered scapegoats to blame for the "failure" of the church's hierarchy to dismantle Vatican II and its works — especially those pertaining to the renewal and reform of the liturgy: from the handshake of peace and the altar facing the people to Communion in the hand and women in the sanctuary.

Like the right-wing Republicans who are furious with Republican members of Congress for not using their majorities to repeal the governmental programs of the past 65 years, the type of Catholic who has taken in recent months to demonizing Cardinal Roger Mahony is really upset with the hierarchy as a whole. Cardinal Mahony is just a convenient target.

Were it not for these recent attacks on the cardinal-archbishop of Los Angeles, however, I might never have read his fine

pastoral letter, "Gather Faithfully Together: A Guide for Sunday Mass," which is reprinted in the Sept. 25 issue of *Origins*, published by the Catholic News Service.

Written to prepare the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for the jubilee year 2000, the letter calls for a thorough renewal of the way Catholics worship together eucharistically each Sunday.

If the letter suffers any deficiency at all, it may be its length. But that should not deter potential readers from picking it up and reading it all the way through.

Although the letter also contains ample liturgical theory, it is a thoroughly practical document. The first of its two main parts presents the cardinal's "vision" of how the Sunday Eucharist will be celebrated in his own cathedral parish of Our Lady of the Angels in the year 2000.

It is a compelling and even thrilling vision, one that sets an achievable standard for all of the other parishes in the archdiocese, indeed for parishes everywhere.

It calls for nothing less than the full implementation of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the liturgical life of the church.

More next week.

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

We shall be judged by how we loved God, others

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 4:21-30. (R1) Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19. (R2) 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13.

How hard it is to name a worthy role model for our young people. How hard it is to name a politician they can admire without reservation. How hard it is to find a decent show to watch on television. We flip through 40 channels and often end up saying, "There's little to watch. All is mediocrity."

How welcomed, then, are the words of St. Paul when he says, "Now I will show you the way which surpasses all the others." He goes on to say you can be an eloquent preacher of the Gospel, have your words aired round the world, but if you have a heart full of hatred and indulge in character assassination, you're just a windbag — "a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal." You can have a Ph.D. in nuclear physics, be a Nobel Prize winner with several books to your credit, but if you are not able to relate to your family, you've accomplished nothing. You may be an Olympic star, win the decathlon, but if you don't care for others, your golden medals are a sham. For all that matters is love!

Albert Schweitzer was asked to name



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

the greatest person in the world. The good doctor replied, "The greatest person in the world is some unknown individual in some obscure corner of the earth who at this very hour has gone in love to be with another person in need."

That's the first thing Paul says is most important — love.

The second thing Paul says is that love is more than an emotion.

"Love is patient; love is kind; love is never rude." Is that the kind of love husbands and wives have for each other?

A woman visited a newspaper editor's office, hoping to sell him some poems she had written.

"What are your poems about?" the editor asked.

"They're about love!" the poetess

gushed.

The editor sat back to listen.

Her poems were about moons and Junes and other sticky sentiments.

"I'm sorry," the editor finally said, "but you just don't know what love is all about! It's not moonlight and roses. It's sitting up all night at a sick bed, or working extra hours so the kids can have new shoes. The world doesn't need your brand of poetical love. It needs some good old-fashioned practical love."

That's why the world treasured Mother Teresa. Determined that dying people deserve to be treated with dignity, Mother left the security of the convent with only a coin in her pocket, and went into the streets of Calcutta looking for dying people. She dragged their dying bodies into a temple that had been offered to her by the city — a deserted and dirty place, which she cleaned up and put to use. There she loved and cared for the dying people until they died. "Everybody at least deserves to have somebody love them while they are dying," she said. And the miracle happened that many of them stopped dying.

But there is one thing more St. Paul said, namely, love is eternal. Everything else passes away but not love. Everything

else you have or accomplish will one day be left behind. The one thing you can take is the love you gave to God and to others. In the eventide of life we shall be judged by love.

Only two things really matter in this world: our love for God and our love for others. For love is true excellence, more than an emotion, and eternal.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, February 2

Malachi 3:1-4; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22-32

Tuesday, February 3

2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14, 24-25, 30-19:3; Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday, February 4

2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17; Mark 6:1-6

Thursday, February 5

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12; Mark 6:7-13

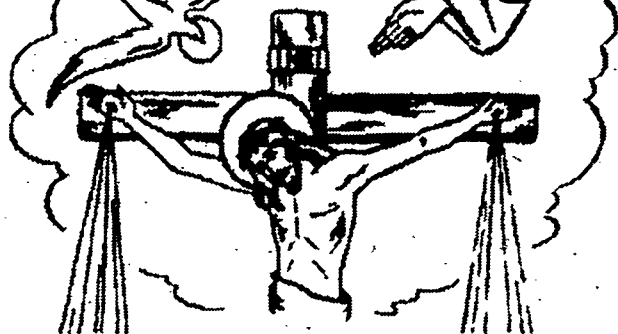
Friday, February 6

Sirach 47:2-11; Mark 6:14-29

Saturday, February 7

1 Kings 3:4-13; Mark 6:30-34

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