

COLUMNISTS

The popes we've known

Catholics born after 1970, who are now 29 or younger, have really known only one pope in their lifetimes, John Paul II (elected in 1978). This generation's idea of how a pope is supposed to look and act is determined almost entirely by its knowledge and experience of the current pope.

The same was true of my own generation. Those of us born between 1930 and 1950, who are now between 49 and 69, knew only one pope until his death in October 1958: Pius XII (elected in 1939). Our idea of how a pope was supposed to look and act was also determined almost entirely by our knowledge and experience of Pius XII.

We assumed that popes were supposed to be aloof, remote, austere, aristocratic in bearing, and just this side of divine. A common photograph of Pius XII was with arms uplifted in prayer. Occasionally he would be shown with a pair of doves or some other tiny bird in hand.

By contrast, John Paul II is seen by the current younger generation as anything but aloof, remote, austere, aristocratic, or quasi-divine. Unlike Pius, John Paul has taken full advantage of the media, particularly television, and of jet transportation. Given his background as an actor and a playwright, John Paul II re-



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

sponds with a natural ease and charisma to the enormous crowds that have flocked to see and hear him wherever he travels around the globe.

Notwithstanding lingering questions about the Holocaust, Pope Pius XII was a respected and even revered public figure by the time of his death in 1958. But he never achieved the super-star status of John Paul II, who has been recognized, among other things, as *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year" in 1994.

Pius XII's pontificate was marked throughout by world conflict: first, the Second World War and then the beginnings of the Cold War. John Paul II's has seen the collapse of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe, an event to which he himself contributed.

The two popes also have some impor-

tant things in common, including their profound devotion to the Blessed Mother. Pius defined the dogma of the Assumption in 1950 and declared a Marian Year in 1954. John Paul II wrote a major encyclical on Mary and declared a Marian Year as well in 1987.

Both were also severe with theologians, mainly through the hard-line prefects of their doctrinal congregations: Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, a leader of the defeated minority at Vatican II, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, a progressive theologian at the council who became increasingly conservative thereafter.

Pius XII condemned the so-called "new theology," centered largely in France after the Second World War. Ironically, it included at least three scholars who were later rehabilitated and named cardinals by subsequent popes: Jean Daniélou (by Paul VI), and Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar (by John Paul II). His toughly worded encyclical, *Humani generis* (1950), also insisted that, once the pope takes a stand on a disputed point, it can no longer be the subject of discussion among theologians. John Paul II has applied that same principle to the subject of women's ordination.

Like Pius XII, who ordered theologians in France (like Congar) removed

from their teaching positions, John Paul II withdrew the canonical mission to teach Catholic theology from two prominent theologians, Hans Küng and Charles Curran, and excommunicated another, a Sri Lankan Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Tissa Balasuriya, 71. (The excommunication was lifted the next year.)

Both popes were also prolific in their official writings. Pius XII published more than 30 encyclicals (of varying lengths), including three that unwittingly prepared the way for Vatican II: *Mystici Corporis Christi* (on the church as the mystical body of Christ), *Divino afflante Spiritu* (on the renewal of biblical studies), and *Mediator Dei* (on the renewal and reform of the liturgy). John Paul II has published 13 to date, the most recent, *Fides et ratio* (on faith and reason).

Pope Pius XII died Oct. 9, 1958, and, although he had appointed most of the cardinals who would choose his successor, he was followed by someone very different from himself in personality and pastoral outlook: John XXIII.

Could that happen again? Yes, if the history of papal elections is a reliable guide. But only God knows.

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

'Dem dry bones' gonna rise again

Fifth Sunday of Lent: (R3) John 11:1-45. (R1) Ezekiel 37:12-14. (3) Romans 8:8-11.

Sunday's theme is resurrection: of a nation (R1), from spiritual death (R2); and from physical death (R3).

In the dark days before the Civil War, slaves in the South had little to hope for. They had been torn from their homes and families in Africa. Their families were repeatedly shattered as husband and wife and children could be sold off in different directions. They turned to Ezekiel to give them hope that one day they might be free and be a people again. So one of their spirituals was "Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones...will rise again."

In the vision God gave Ezekiel the dry bones represented Israel scattered all over the earth. But the bones came together, flesh appeared on the bones, then the Spirit of God blew into them and they became alive. God promised that the nation Israel, "dem dry bones," would live again. So hoped the slaves in the South.

In the Gospel the home of Mary and Martha was like a valley of dry bones. Lazarus had died. When Jesus arrived, the hearts of Mary and Martha were



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

breaking; their spirits were low. Mary said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus was troubled and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him."

At the tomb, Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha said, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days."

Jesus said to Martha, "Believe." So they took away the stone and Jesus cried out, "Lazarus, come out!" He did. And Jesus said, "Untie him and let him go."

The purpose of this miracle was that the Son of God might be glorified by demonstrating his power over death.

Joe, an Army mineralogist was stationed in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1964 when that year's great earthquake hit. Joe's first inkling of trouble came when water in his bathroom suddenly shot up and splashed all over the ceiling. Joe ran out of the house.

The street was full of people and the quake at its peak. One young mother, Joe's next-door neighbor, with a toddler in each arm and a terrified look staggered up to him and cried out, "Joe you're a geologist! For God's sake, do something."

Well, poor Joe was in a bind. He had studied earthquakes, but he had no power to stop one or prevent one from getting started.

But Jesus had power over death. "Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones..." It is a staggering thought.

The greatest miracle in life is when a person who has been spiritually dead comes alive to Christ and the Master says, "Untie him and let him go."

A nurse on the pediatric ward gently tucked her stethoscope in the ears of a 4-year-old patient and placed the disk over his heart. She said, "Listen. What do you suppose that is?" As he heard the tap-tapping of his heartbeat, his face broke

out in a wondrous grin. "Is that Jesus knocking?" he asked.

Yes, Jesus knocks at our hearts every day to bring new life to "Dem dry bones."

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

Daily Readings

Monday, March 29

Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11

Tuesday, March 30

Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38

Wednesday, March 31

Isaiah 50:4-9; Matthew 26:14-25

Thursday, April 1

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Friday, April 2

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42

Saturday, April 3

Genesis 1:1-2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15-15:1

Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11;

Baruch 3:9-15, 32-44

Ezekiel 36:16-17, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10

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