

# COLUMNISTS

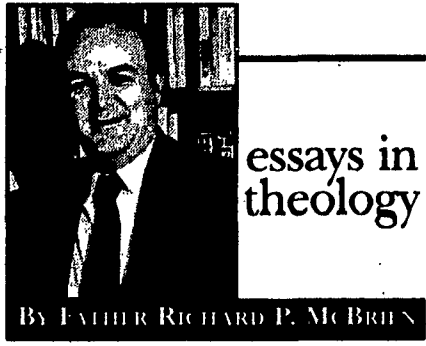
## What's there to smile about with Milosevic?

I am writing this on the vigil of Easter, the church's holiest day. The situation in Yugoslavia is such that the contents of this column are likely to be surpassed, in whole or in part, by the rush of events over the course of the next three weeks.

It is very difficult to sort out all of the political, social, historical and religious forces that have brought that troubled region of the world to this tragic point. But it is hardly a 50-50 proposition, with blame to be evenly divided.

For almost the entire post-war period, Marshal Josip Tito, a Communist who had led the partisan movement against the German occupation of Yugoslavia, ruled the then-larger country with an iron hand. He absolutely forbade the very mention of ethnic diversity and severely punished any effort to capitalize on ethnic divisions. Consequently, until his death in 1980 there was little or no ethnic strife in that multi-ethnic land.

Unfortunately, the ugly head of nationalism resurfaced. It came to a flashpoint in 1987 when a relatively obscure Communist apparatchik gave an inflammatory speech in Kosovo that was in direct violation of Marshal Tito's cardinal rule. He appealed blatantly to Serbian nationalism, assuring the Kosovar Serbs (who were outnumbered 9-1 by Kosovo's



essays in theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

ethnic Albanian population) that they would never lose their land.

That man was Slobodan Milosevic, who vaulted immediately to the heights of political power. Two years later he revoked the political autonomy that Kosovo had enjoyed since Tito.

Ever since then — in Bosnia, in Croatia, and now in Kosovo itself — he has been engaged in a relentlessly cruel campaign of ethnic cleansing, engineering through intimidation and violence the movement of large segments of non-Serbian peoples out of their homelands to be replaced by ethnic Serbs.

During Holy Week the Vatican called upon the NATO forces and the Yugoslav government to cease hostilities over Easter. NATO rejected these appeals on the grounds that a suspension would only

give Milosevic more time and greater freedom to complete his campaign of mass deportations.

More than a third of the Kosovar ethnic Albanians have been driven from their homes on foot and by train — in a scene to some extent reminiscent of the Holocaust — with no food, water, shelter, medical care, or even identities, all of their papers, passports, and car licenses having been confiscated and destroyed.

It was a distressing picture, therefore, when television news programs showed the Vatican representative, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, exchanging greetings and enjoying a friendly laugh with Milosevic, whom many regard as nothing less than monstrous. It was Holy Thursday.

The previous day the eight American cardinals, in letters to President Clinton and President Milosevic, called for an immediate end to the conflict and a resumption of negotiations — negotiations whose terms Milosevic has consistently flaunted. Specifically, they urged the Yugoslav leader to end his attacks on the Kosovar Albanians and President Clinton to halt NATO's air strikes.

Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles offered even wiser and more realistic conditions for peace, indicating, however, that they reflected the views of the

other cardinals as well: an end to Yugoslav violence in Kosovo, a halt to the bombing, a return of the refugees to their homes, international aid to Kosovar civilians and a monitoring of the peace, and a regional peace conference. "It doesn't work without all five," he said.

The president of the U.S. bishops' conference, Bishop Joseph Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, pointed out that Milosevic must halt his "intolerable aggression" against the Kosovar Albanians before NATO can stop the bombing as an "appropriate response."

The problem is that, as of this writing, Milosevic has already accomplished most of what he set out to do. If there is to be a return of the refugees, where are they to live? Their homes and places of work have been destroyed. How are they to establish their claim as citizens of Kosovo? Their identities have been obliterated.

It might have been better if Archbishop Tauran had stayed home. His smiling encounter with Slobodan Milosevic did not enhance the image of the church and it proved unproductive in any case. Perhaps the pope should have sent Cardinal Mahony instead.

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

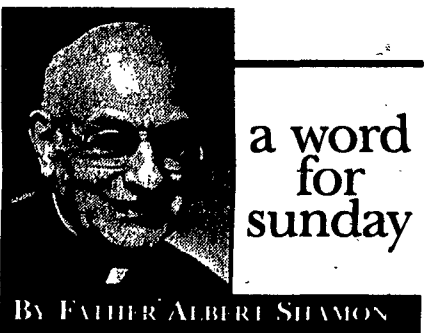
## Good Shepherd knows his sheep

4th Sunday of Easter: (R3) John 10:1-10. (R1) Acts 2:14, 36-41. (R2) 1 Peter 2:20-25.

A family of five was enjoying their day at the beach. The children were bathing in the ocean and making castles in the sand when in the distance a little old lady appeared. Her gray hair was blowing in the wind and her clothes were dirty and ragged. She was muttering something to herself as she picked up things from the beach and put them into a bag. The parents called the children to their side and told them to stay away from the old lady. As she passed by, bending down every now and then to pick things up, she smiled at the family. But her greeting wasn't returned. Many weeks later they learned that the little old lady had made it her lifelong crusade to pick up bits of glass from the beach so children wouldn't cut their feet.

A rather thankless job, wouldn't you say? Picking up bits of glass so children won't cut their feet.

In the days of our Lord, being a shepherd was a thankless job. The life of a shepherd was hard. The shepherd was never off duty. Grass was scarce on the narrow plateau of Palestine so the sheep were bound to wander. Since there were



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

no protecting walls, the sheep had constantly to be watched. On either side of the narrow plateau, the ground dipped sharply to craggy deserts and the sheep were always liable to stray away.

Besides, the shepherd's life was dangerous. He had to guard his flock against wild animals, especially wolves; then too there were always thieves and robbers. With little pay and human contact, being a shepherd was a thankless job.

Yet that is exactly how Christ portrayed himself — as a shepherd. One of the most frequent images of Christ in the catacombs is that of a shepherd holding a lamb in his arms. A lamb is not a full-grown sheep. Its wool is not wet and matted. It isn't caught in a crevasse. It is not bleating to be rescued. Yet tenderly the

shepherd holds the lamb.

There is a certain bonding that takes place between the shepherd and his sheep. "The sheep hears his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." Sheep-calling contests are common in Palestine. Flocks are placed in an enclosure and mixed together. Then shepherds whistle a distinctive tune, call or shout in a peculiar manner or use a pipe. Each shepherd's signal is understood by his own sheep and they respond immediately. They make their way to their shepherd. The shepherd who collects the most sheep in the shortest time wins the contest. Sheep know their shepherd's voice and follow him.

And a good shepherd knows his sheep. To an untrained eye all the sheep in a flock look alike.

Once a shepherd explained to a visitor various traits and defects of his sheep.

"See that sheep over there?" he asked. "Notice how it totes in a little. The one behind it has a squint; the next one has a patch of wool off its back; ahead is one with a distinguishing black mark, while the one closest to us has a small piece torn out of its ear."

The visitor thought about Christ, the Good Shepherd. He knows the individ-

ual weaknesses and failing of his flock and watches over them with discerning love and sympathetic understanding.

He watches over his sheep. He knows each of us by name. He even lays down his life for his sheep. He calls us to take up the often-thankless job of serving others: to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to labor and to look for no reward save that of knowing we are doing his holy will.

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

### Daily Readings

Monday, April 26

Acts 11:1-18; John 10:11-18

Tuesday, April 27

Acts 11:19-26; John 10:22-30

Wednesday, April 28

Acts 12:24-13:5; John 12:44-50

Thursday, April 29

Acts 13:13-25; John 13:16-20

Friday, April 30

Acts 13:26-33; John 14:1-6

Saturday, May 1

Acts 13:44-52; John 14:7-14

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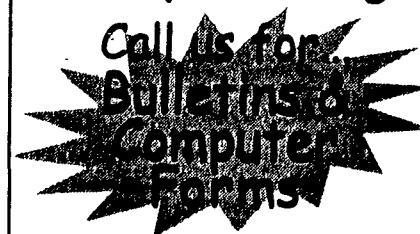
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