

COLUMNISTS

The church should not exist in isolation

This is not the first column I have written on the relationship between the church and culture, and it is not likely to be the last. The issue has confronted the church from the very beginning of its existence, and will continue to do so until the end of time. What should be the role of the church in the world? Should the church be indifferent to the society around it? Should it isolate itself completely from it, even to the point of hostility? Or should it uncritically embrace the world, accepting at face-value whatever it has to offer?

The first option is referred to today as countercultural. In this view, the church alone has the true culture, permeated with the spirit of Christ. The world's cultures, on the other hand, are corrupted by sin, and the corruption is contagious. For that reason, counterculturalism always has a separatist thrust.

The second option might be called lazy liberalism. According to this view, the church is a cheerleader, not a scold. It embraces the world and all of its works. The last thing the church should do is to challenge the world's illusions and pretensions, even if they might be harmful to the common good or to the dignity of individual persons.

As always, the truth lies somewhere be-



essays in
theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

tween these two extremes. The Catholic Church's official teaching — as expressed in various social encyclicals and especially in the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World — is that the church has a positive role to play in the world, because the world is at once holy and sinful. It is holy because it comes from the creative hand of God, has been redeemed by Jesus Christ, is permeated now with the Holy Spirit, and is destined for future glory (Romans 8:18-25). The world is sinful because it shares in the sin of Adam and Eve (5:12-14). It was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it (5:20).

But this is not to say that sin and grace are of equal force, with the final outcome of their battle in doubt. Unlike certain Protestant views, Catholicism holds with

St. Paul that where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more (5:20).

Grace is indeed more powerful than sin, not just in individuals but in the world and its cultures as well. While the church is always realistic about the existence of sin in the world and about sin's capacity to infect and corrupt certain aspects of human culture, that realism never degenerates into pessimism, defeatism or isolationism.

According to the teaching of Vatican II, we are to engage the world and its cultures, not flee or shun them. Milwaukee's Archbishop Rembert Weakland places himself within the heart of such teaching in a recent e-mail message to all of the ministers in his archdiocese. Two events, he said, provoked the message.

The first was the announcement that Tom Monaghan, former chairman of Domino's Pizza and founder of Legatus, a conservative Catholic business group, will contribute \$50 million to create the Ave Maria Law School in Ann Arbor, Mich., as a kind of West Point for the training of Catholic lawyers. The school will be independent of any existing Catholic university, and the emphasis, according to Monaghan, will be on the application of Catholic moral teachings to the law.

The second event was the cover story on the new countercultural seminarians,

published on Easter Sunday in the *The New York Times Magazine*. I referred to this article in last week's column.

Archbishop Weakland suggests that both Mr. Monaghan's initiative and the attitudes expressed by the seminarians reflect an unbalanced (and I would say even un-Catholic) understanding of the church/world relationship. It would require no great effort, the archbishop pointed out, to make a list of the negative aspects of American culture and then to write a jeremiad about them. But one can just as easily make a list of the positives because there is much that is good and encouraging in the culture. Indeed, from its earliest years the church has tried to take the best from contemporary culture and then Christianize it.

As Vatican II insisted, we have much to learn from the modern world and much to contribute to it as well. That is why the church cannot become isolationist. It must operate in the mainstream of society. It is far more fruitful, the archbishop concludes, to work with other people of good will in trying to find solutions to the great moral problems of our time than in creating intellectual or ecclesial ghettos.

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

Jesus needs us to complete the picture

11th Sunday of the Year (June 13): (R3) Matthew 9:36-10:8; (R1) Exodus 19:22-6. (R2) Romans 5:6-11.

"At sight of the crowd, the heart of Jesus was moved with pity." His people were like sheep without a shepherd. So he summoned the Twelve: Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James and Thaddeus; Simon and Judas.

The remarkable thing is that these 12 worked so well together. Philip was a scholar. Matthew a tax collector and so considered by some a traitor to his people. Simon the Zealot belonged to a nationalist group. Judas Iscariot was not even from Galilee; he was an out-of-towner. What bound them together? It was Jesus and the mission he gave them to the needy.

It is clear that the first kind of people Jesus needed were ordinary people. God doesn't necessarily use the most talented people. He doesn't use the most beautiful, or even the most articulate. He used ordinary people like you and me.

Just think of this. Abraham was an old man when called by God. Moses stuttered. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Jacob was deceitful. David, an adulterer and a mur-



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER AUBRI SHAMON

derer. To many John the Baptist was too stern; whereas they considered Jesus too lenient. Martha was a worrywart; Mary was too lazy. Peter denied Jesus. Thomas doubted him. Yet God used every one of them. God doesn't look at our resumes. He looks at our dedication.

He needs men and women dedicated to his mission. Generally, they will be ordinary people like you and me, but with an extraordinary passion for his mission.

God looks for people who have a passion for serving others. That is why the church has contributed so much to the welfare of others. Jesus told his Apostles to cure diseases of every kind. Fabiola, a disciple of St. Jerome, built the first hospital in the western world about 400 A.D. The oldest hospital in existence today is the

Hotel Dieu in Paris, established by St. Landry around 600. Florence Nightingale, who gave us the Red Cross, was a follower of Christ. Louis Pasteur, who died holding the hand of his wife and a crucifix in the other hand, revolutionized medicine.

Like Florence Nightingale and Louis Pasteur, the early disciples worked to bring healing into the lives of people who were hurting, whatever that hurt might have been. No matter if another's hurt is physical or emotional or spiritual, we are to share Christ's love with them as much we are able. That's what Christ needs from you and me. He doesn't need extraordinary people. He uses ordinary people with an extraordinary passion for bringing Christ's love to others.

I am sure all of you are familiar with a jigsaw puzzle. The puzzle consists of a lot of pieces — different in size, shape and color. They don't look as if they would fit together very well. Yet if you work with the pieces and put them together, you will end up with a really pretty picture.

Similarly, people can be like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes it seems they wouldn't work well together either, but somehow they do, like recruits in an army. When Jesus called his 12 disciples together, it didn't look like they would

work well together. Yet like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, they worked together just fine. They went around preaching and teaching together and they spread the news of Jesus all over the world.

God can use anybody to do his work — just so long as they are faithful to him — dedicated, open, prayerful and humble. Ask Jesus to use you as he did the Twelve.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, June 14
2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Matthew 5:38-42

Tuesday, June 15
2 Corinthians 8:1-9; Matthew 5:43-48

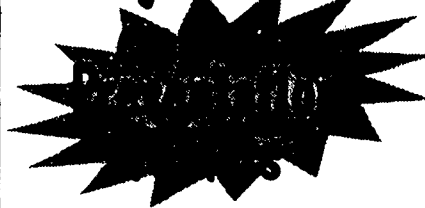
Wednesday, June 16
2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, June 17
2 Corinthians 11:1-11; Matthew 6:7-15

Friday, June 18
2 Corinthians 11:18, 21-30; Matthew 6:19-23

Saturday, June 19
2 Corinthians 12:1-10; Matthew 6:24-34

Looking for Quality
Printing?



Through a special arrangement between Wayuga Press and the Catholic Courier Graphic's Department, you can now get quality, affordable typesetting and printing.

Give us a call for your next job!

COURIER GRAPHICS • 716-328-4340
WAYUGA PRESS • 315-754-6229

**HART
MONUMENT
COMPANY**

Since 1856

Monuments, Markers
and Cemetery Lettering

2301 Dewey Avenue
(OPPOSITE HOLY SEPULCHRE CEMETERY)
(716) 865-6746

Holl's Inn

An Old-Fashioned Summer Family Resort
Since 1935 • 65th Season

- The Family Resort on Fourth Lake
- Open July 1st thru Labor Day
- Swimming, Boating, Golfing nearby
- Rates from \$85-\$120 per day/per person (includes 3 meals daily)
- Weekly and Family Rates, as well
- All rooms with private baths
- New! Housekeeping Cottages

Located in the Central Adirondacks
(65 miles north of exit 31, Utica, NY)

Preseason: 315-733-2748

Summer: 315-357-2941

S. Shore Rd. • PO Box 417 • Inlet, NY 13360



YOUR DREAM VACATIONS

ITALY Escorted fr. Roch
Oct. 2 - Oct. 15 \$1,699

Rome, Florence, Lake Como,
Venice, Assisi, Sorrento

NORTHERN ITALY - fr. Roch.
July 25 - Aug. 8 & Sept. 12 - Sept. 26
15 days - Lugano, Venice, \$3,490
Florence, Pisa, Rome, Sorrento, Capri.

EUROPE - 13 DAYS Escorted fr. Roch.
England, Holland, Germany,
Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France \$1,789
Aug. 15 - Aug. 27
Hotels, Meals, Sites

SPECIALS FROM TORONTO
LONDONfr. 455 BRUSSELSfr. \$530
PARISfr. \$545 ATHENSfr. \$967
AMSTERDAM .fr. \$480 FRANKFURT .fr. \$550

EMPIRE TRAVEL est. 1903
482-2800 185 Empire Blvd.
Outside Monroe County 1-800-836-2435