

COLUMNISTS

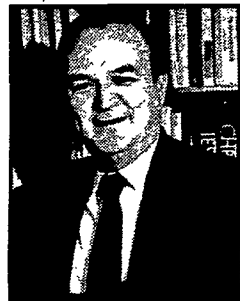
Visit showed pope's ecumenical sensitivity

It has been more than three months since Pope John Paul II's first visit to a predominantly Orthodox country. To be sure, the pilgrimage to Romania in early May was politically circumscribed, but the political factors were advantageous as well as disadvantageous. At the insistence of the Orthodox and with the agreement of the Romanian government, the pope was prevented from visiting Transylvania, whose bishops had invited him and where most of the Romanian Catholic population resides.

On the other hand, the invitation might never have been extended to the pope if the government had not "encouraged" the Romanian Orthodox Church to do so. The government's interest is to align itself more closely with the West, including eventual membership in NATO.

Politics aside, however, those who review and ponder the pope's message to the Romanian Orthodox bishops can only be deeply impressed by John Paul II's ecumenical sensitivity toward the separated churches of the East.

Indeed, he has made reunion with the East one of the highest priorities of his pontificate. One of the first of his many papal trips abroad was to Turkey in 1979, where he was present at a Divine Liturgy celebrated by the ecumenical patriarch of



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

Constantinople, the historic center of Eastern Christianity. It was on May 8 of this year that the pope addressed the Romanian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod in Bucharest to thank them "for wanting to be the first Orthodox church to invite the pope of Rome to her country." (The synod is composed of Romania's 36 Orthodox bishops, including Patriarch Teoctist.) Significantly, the pope addressed the Orthodox bishops as "venerable brothers in the episcopate," and as "successors" of the apostles.

He readily acknowledged the authentic Christian spirituality of the Romanian Orthodox Church. And he spoke with "deep feeling" about his "touching memory" of the Orthodox patriarch's own earlier visit to Rome. "It is now my turn, as a pilgrim of love," the pope said, "to pay

homage to this land steeped in the blood of ancient and recent martyrs...and to meet a people who welcomed the Gospel, assimilated it, defended it against repeated attacks and now consider it an integral part of their cultural heritage.

"I have come," he declared, "to contemplate the face of Christ etched in your church; I have come to venerate this suffering face, the pledge to you of new hope." Conscious in particular of the coming new millennium and of the need of all Christian churches to renew themselves for the sake of the Gospel, the pope affirmed his "support," "esteem" and "admiration" for the program of ecclesial renewal that the Holy Synod has undertaken in theological and catechetical formation. "Catholics are at the side of their Orthodox brethren in prayer and in their willingness to help in any useful way.

"Common witness," he continued, "is a powerful means of evangelization. Division, on the other hand, shows the victory of darkness over light." The pope acknowledged that the respective churches "have known conflict, recrimination, inner reticence and closure to one another. Yet we are both witnesses that despite these divisions, at the moment of the great trial when our churches seemed shaken to their very foundations, here

too, in this land of Romania, the martyrs and confessors knew how to glorify God's name with one heart and one soul.

"May dialogue," he prayed, "be the way to heal the wounds that are still open and to resolve difficulties that still exist!" Pointing out that the two churches "have come a long way on the road to reconciliation," he proposed that "the time has come to resume theological research with determination, supported by prayer and by the sympathy of all the Orthodox and Catholic faithful."

Obviously mindful of ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia, he underscored the urgency of mounting "a witness of fraternal love that overcomes hatred and quarrel and opens hearts to reconciliation!"

"We will cross this threshold of the new millennium with our martyrs, with all who have given their lives for the faith: Orthodox, Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants," he concluded.

One can only speculate about how different this pontificate might have been if this same, wonderfully irenic approach could also have been applied to conflicts and divisions within the Catholic Church itself.

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

Who do you say Jesus is?

21st Sunday of the Year (Aug. 22): (R3) Matthew 16:13-20. (R1) Isaiah 22:15, 19-23. (R2) Romans 11:33-36.

In the region of Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked his disciples one of the most famous questions in our faith: "Who do people say that I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say that I am?"

That's the key question about Christianity, isn't it? Who do we say Jesus is?

A woman received a call at work that her daughter was sick. She stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication. When she returned to her car, she found that she had locked her keys inside.

She bowed her head and asked God to send her help. Within five minutes an old rusty car pulled up, with a dirty, greasy, bearded man with an old biker skull rag on his head.

The man asked her if he could help. She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get her some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Can you help?"

"Sure," said the man. He walked over



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

to the car, and in less than one minute the car was opened. She hugged the man through her tears and said, "Thank you so much. You're a nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft."

The woman hugged the man again and with sobbing tears cried out loud: "Thank you, God, for sending me a professional!"

Does Jesus care what happens in our lives? You bet he does!

A second question is like the first: Can Christ really help me with my problems? And does he?

A waitress saw a young man sitting in her section with a cup of coffee. He looked about 19, was bald, with signs of

body piercing. When the waitress asked him if he wanted anything, other than coffee, he said he didn't even have the money to pay for the coffee.

The waitress told him she would pay for it. Then she said that if she ever needed a cup of coffee she hoped someone would see fit to buy her one.

A little later she saw the young man crying. She asked him if he was all right. He said the people who had been sitting at the next table gave him \$5 on their way out. Then a couple asked him if he had a place to stay and gave him \$10. Finally, another man offered him a job.

The lad said that when he woke up that morning, he had decided that this would be his last day on earth. His parents had kicked him out when he was 16. Things got so hard that he had nowhere to turn. Now he had a place to stay, a job and \$15.

One way God provides for our needs is by sending angels into our lives: friends, family members, colleagues at work, and sometimes even complete strangers. Sometimes God uses us to be angels to someone else. Millions of people throughout the ages can testify that they have come through difficult times in their lives, because God used some-

one to extend a helping hand.

Who do you say Christ is? He is the one who cares, the one who helps in times of distress, and the one who is ever there whatever life, or death, may bring. We can trust Christ without reservation. He will never let go of our hand.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, August 23

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 8-10;
Matthew 23:13-22

Tuesday, August 24

Revelation 21:9-14; John 1:45-51

Wednesday, August 25

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13;
Matthew 23:27-32

Thursday, August 26

1 Thessalonians 3:7-13;
Matthew 24:42-51

Friday, August 27

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8;
Matthew 25:1-13

Saturday, August 28

1 Thessalonians 4:9-11;
Matthew 25:14-30



In our community, the Image Centre of the World, we greatly appreciate the value of memories. Pictures capture special moments, family events, and once-in-a-lifetime happenings. Our life, as with a picture, becomes a memory to family and friends. When you consider how you would like to be remembered and memorialized, think of us, we are the CRAWFORD FUNERAL HOME, where helping families share memories has been our focus since 1957.



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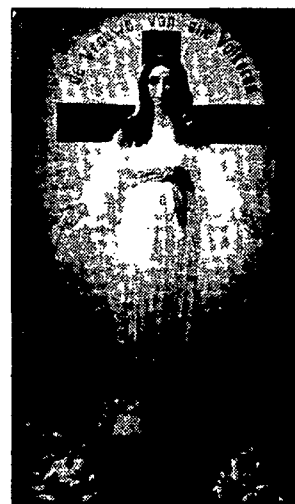


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I your Mother, am coming to visit you as THE MOTHER AND LADY OF ALL NATIONS



Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, send NOW Your Spirit over the earth. Let the Holy Spirit live in the hearts of ALL nations, that they may be preserved from degeneration, disaster, and war. May The Lady Of All Nations, who once was Mary, be our advocate. Amen

For an appointment to see her please call
Dorothy Bartosch - Host Guardian
716-242-9329