

COLUMNISTS

Auxiliary Bishop Murphy applauded by many

Frank Murphy was ordained as an auxiliary bishop of Baltimore in February 1976. He died of cancer early last month, some 23½ years later. He was still an auxiliary bishop.

Therein lies a key to understanding why so many of the church's most active and committed members — laity, religious, and clergy alike — are unhappy with the present leadership.

It was at once incomprehensible and offensive to all who knew Bishop Murphy that he should have been consistently and deliberately passed over for appointment as a diocesan bishop. Some will assume that his public stand in favor of the ordination of women was enough to do him in. After all, did not the pope make it clear that this rule would never change and that discussion of it was to stop? But that was after Bishop Murphy expressed his support for the ordination of women in a *Commonweal* article on the proposed bishops' pastoral letter on women (9/25/92). He had served on the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on Women in the Church, 1978-1990.

Bishop Murphy's pastoral concerns were even more broadly based, however, and his death was met with particular sadness by others whose causes he



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

espoused: the poor, those with AIDS, activists in the struggle for social justice and peace, and those involved in interfaith activities. The president of Interfaith Housing of Western Maryland, which Bishop Murphy co-founded in 1989, recalled that the organization started with little more than the bishop's vision. Today it has built or rehabilitated more than 450 housing units.

"I have memories of a man — who knows nothing of hammering nails — hammering nails with a welfare mom in Taneytown in Carroll County," James Upchurch told *The Baltimore Sun*.

Bishop Murphy was also an active member of Pax Christi, a Catholic peace organization. He opposed the Persian Gulf War (so did Pope John Paul II), condemned the recent bombing in

Yugoslavia, and called for an end to U.N. sanctions against Iraq. He took the lead in urging the episcopal conference in 1980 to launch a study of the church's teaching on nuclear weapons and the morality of modern warfare. This led to the celebrated pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace," in 1983.

Otherwise, the milestones of his ecclesiastical career seemed normal for a young man on the way up. Sent to study in Rome, he was ordained there in December 1958. After a short stint as a parish priest and high school vocation director, he returned in 1961 as vice rector at the North American College. Four years later he was made a monsignor and secretary to Cardinal Lawrence Shehan, archbishop of Baltimore.

In response to Cardinal Shehan's wishes, he delivered the eulogy at the cardinal's funeral in 1984. But it was during Bishop Murphy's own funeral last month that something remarkable happened. The homilist, Father Robert Leavitt, president-rector of St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, was interrupted three times by applause.

The first time he said that Frank Murphy had no acquaintances, only friends. "That's true, isn't it?" he asked.

Later, Father Leavitt pointed out that Bishop Murphy was dedicated to making real the vision of the Second Vatican Council. "Not one or two, but many generations will be required to absorb and apply its vision and teaching."

"Frank Murphy, my friends, belongs to that first, courageous, bold and energetic generation."

This remark was greeted with several minutes of applause, *The Baltimore Sun* reported. "Then, starting from the back of the cathedral, people started rising, until the entire congregation was on its feet applauding, a sound that exploded to a cheer when the cardinals and bishops on the altar rose as well."

According to a retired Baltimore priest, "the outburst meant that the original spirit of Vatican II was being reaffirmed in the face of what many felt was a betrayal of that spirit by the contemporary papacy and Curia, and even by Baltimore's Cardinal William Keeler."

A third round of applause followed mention of Bishop Murphy's work for women's rights in the church. Once again the congregation was on its feet with loud and vigorous applause.

This time the bishops did not join in. One suspects the heavenly choirs did.

Never got around to it

26th Sunday of the Year (Sept. 26): (R3) Matthew 21:28-32. (R1) Ezekiel 18:25-28. (R2) Philippians 2:1-11.

A father had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Go and work in my vineyard." The boy said, "I will not." But afterward he changed his mind and went. The man gave the same order to the other son. He said in reply, "Yes, Sir," but did not go. "Which of these two," Jesus asked, "did his father's will?"

The second son had good intentions. But good intentions are not enough. Somebody said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

In the early days of photography, cameras were large, stationary and slow, hardly conducive to shooting candid photographs. So Gould Levison and his partner George Bradford Brainerd invented their own camera, which they patented in 1885 as the Brainerd-Levison Hand Camera. The pair took the camera along on outings and took all kinds of scenic photographs. Their partnership ended with Brainerd's death in 1887 at the age of 41.

That same year Levison invented a camera that could take a series of pictures in rapid succession. Unfortunately, the distractions of family concerns and other



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

projects kept him from completing the paperwork to patent his invention. The delay cost him his shot at immortality. In 1891, Thomas Edison also invented a camera for taking pictures in rapid succession but it was he who patented the motion-picture camera.

Levison intended to patent his own camera. But he never got around to it. Good intentions.

Dale Carnegie said that one of the most tragic characteristics of human nature is that we all tend to put off living. So many dream of some magical rose garden over the horizon — instead of enjoying the roses blooming outside our windows today. Good intentions.

We don't know why the second son never got to his chores. Procrastination?

Something more appealing came along? We don't know, but we do know it is very much a part of human nature to make commitments that we do not keep.

The great Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, once told a story of a flock of geese that was starting to head south to escape the wintry winds. The first night they landed in a farmer's yard and filled themselves with corn. Next morning they flew on — all, that is, except one.

"The corn is good," this big goose said, "so I will stay and enjoy it another day." The next morning he decided to wait still another day, and another after that. Pretty soon he had developed a habit. "Tomorrow I will fly south," he said. Then came the inevitable day when the winds of winter were so severe that waiting longer would mean death in the frozen wastes. So he stretched his wings and waddled across the barnyard, picking up speed as he went. But alas! He was too fat to fly. He had waited too long.

Someone once put it like this. Jesus said, "Follow me," but we work to evaluate his intent. Jesus said, "Follow me," but we question the results of such an action. We could lose members and cause division. Jesus said, "Follow me," but I think the hours and the days are not

convenient. We should discuss this another time. Jesus said, "Follow me," but what will it cost in dollars and in cents? Our budget is already tight. Jesus said, "Follow me," but have we got time for such a commitment?

Then a voice from heaven said, "For Jesus' sake and your own, just follow him." A father had two sons.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, September 27

Zechariah 8:1-8; Luke 9:46-50

Tuesday, September 28

Zechariah 8:20-23; Luke 9:51-56

Wednesday, September 29

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12; John 1:47-51

Thursday, September 30

Nehemiah 8:1-4, 5-6, 7-12; Luke 10:1-12

Friday, October 1

Baruch 1:15-22; Luke 10:13-16

Saturday, October 2

Baruch 4:5-12, 27-29; Matthew 18:1-5, 10

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