

# COLUMNISTS

## Pope's voice is not the only one

The late Cardinal Basil Hume, archbishop of Westminster in England, was one of the church's most illustrious pastoral leaders. The whole church continues to mourn his loss.

Just before he died, he completed a lecture for the Catholic Common Ground Initiative on unity and diversity in the church. It is said that the cardinal was still revising the text within days of his death. It was delivered for him in Washington, D.C., on the very day of his funeral.

As one would expect of so deeply spiritual and intellectually sophisticated a figure, the talk was at once thoughtful and measured. The unity of the church in the next millennium, he wrote, will depend upon two essentials: a vibrant spirituality in the lives of individuals and society, and a recognition of the centrality of Christ, as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The cardinal pointed out, however, that a unity rooted in a Christ-centered spirituality cannot be achieved without constant dialogue within the church. He described such dialogue as "listening sympathetically to what others have to say, without questioning their motives. It implies respect for the other and not reducing church discussions to polemics."

Although his paper was a splendid piece of work, it was not without a few



### essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

questionable elements. The cardinal asserted, for example, that faith is at issue in the controversy over the ordination of women to the priesthood, and then implied that the pope alone determines the content and requirements of that faith.

"I, for my part, know and understand the arguments for the ordination of women to the priesthood," Cardinal Hume wrote. "But I would not be able to base my final judgment on such a matter on these arguments alone. Faith has to come into play.

"By this I mean I must try to discover the mind of Christ. I have no way of doing this safely, unless I can listen to the authority of the successor of Saint Peter in his role of guiding the church. I like to think this is a profoundly Catholic way of approaching difficult issues."

One might suggest, by way of clarification, that the "profoundly Catholic way" is to take all sources of illumination into account; in other words, to be truly "catholic" in the search for truth.

Since the Holy Spirit permeates the whole church and since the gifts of the Spirit have been given to the faithful "of every rank" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 12), one must listen to the Spirit at work in the faithful at large as well as in the hierarchy.

And within the hierarchy, it is never sufficient to listen to the pope alone, for the Second Vatican Council also reminded us that the church is collegial in nature, not monarchical. The bishops are not the pope's assistants; they are true collaborators in governing the universal church.

This is not to say that the voices of the hierarchy and, within the hierarchy, the voice of the pope are of no greater weight than those of any other members of the church. Although all of the baptized receive the gifts of the Spirit, not all have the same pastoral responsibilities.

As the New Testament discloses, some members have a teaching authority greater than others because of their pastoral office (in the case of the "overseers") or because of their scholarly competence (in the case of the "teachers").

While the pope's voice is to be heard with the greatest measure of attention and respect, it is not the only voice nor is its function to silence all other voices.

Catholics who are disposed to think that the "profoundly Catholic way of approaching difficult issues" is to let the pope finally decide what we are to believe and what we are to do must ask themselves whether they would think the same way if the current pope were the notorious Alexander VI (by no means a rare exception in papal history) rather than the widely respected John Paul II.

Cardinal Hume also asserted that faith comes "into play" in the ordination question because it concerns "the mind of Christ." But even if one were to grant that everything in "the mind of Christ" was also a matter of faith, there is no biblical evidence that Jesus ever expressed his "mind" about ordination in general, much less the ordination of women. This was, in fact, the conclusion reached by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1976.

Nevertheless, we are all in the late cardinal's debt for having stimulated our thinking about such important matters as these.

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

## Be prepared in everyday and spiritual life

32nd Sunday of the Year (Nov. 7): (R3) Matthew 25:1-12. (R1) Wisdom 6:12-16. (R2) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

Excuses are part of life. I've smiled at the more colorful excuses parents have written to their children's teachers.

For example: "My son is under the doctor's care and should not take Physical Ed today. Please excuse him."

And: "Please excuse Mary for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot."

This is a humdinger: "Please excuse Fred for being. It was his father's fault."

Excuses. Unprepared. Jesus told a parable about 10 bridesmaids who were to escort the bridegroom into the wedding feast. But he was late and the bridesmaids fell asleep. He came at midnight. The bridesmaids hurriedly trimmed their lamps, but because of the delay, their supply of oil was depleted. Half were smart; they had brought extra oil. While the others were gone to buy oil, the groom arrived, and he and the bridesmaids who had brought extra oil went into the wedding and the door was shut. The five unprepared bridesmaids were locked out.

"Therefore, stay awake," says Jesus, "for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come."

Sometimes being unprepared can be a



### a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

serious matter.

The landing of the Mayflower is a cherished event in our history. One hundred and two Pilgrims stepped from their storm-tossed little ship in December 1620.

It is hard to imagine a group of people more unprepared for life in the wilderness. The Pilgrims had packed sundials and candle snuffers, a drum, a trumpet, a history of the country of Turkey. One man packed 126 pairs of shoes. Yet they failed to bring a single cow or horse, plow or fishing line. Among the professions on the ship were two tailors, a printer, several merchants, a silk worker, a shopkeeper and a hatter. With the exception of Miles Standish, probably none of the Pilgrims could shoot a gun or hunt.

In a word, they were dangerously un-

prepared for the rigors ahead. By April, when the ship set sail back to England, just 54 of those 102 people had survived.

What were they thinking of? The same question can be asked of us. What are parents thinking of when they ignore their children's preparation for a world of peer pressure and deadly drugs? What are we thinking of when we spend our lives accumulating funds for old age, but ignore the spiritual side of our lives? Being unprepared can be serious business - especially if it be regarding the life to come.

Our Lord's parable teaches us to be prepared spiritually.

To Sharon Whitley her dad was always her hero. He taught her about boys, and about self-respect. When she decided to go into teaching, he encouraged her. But he worried when she got a job at a rough, inner-city school.

One evening, Sharon stayed after school to grade some papers. As she headed for her car, a gang of young men began chasing her. She ran to her car and searched for her key. Miraculously she found a lone key at the bottom of her purse and shoved it into the car door. It worked! She got in just in time.

When Sharon got home, her dad said he'd made an extra key for her car and

left it in her purse - the one Sharon had found. Her dad had been watching out for her, even when she wasn't aware of it.

We need not fear the return of Christ, for God our Father is looking out for us. Whatever the future holds for us, he knows, he loves, he cares. He watches over us even when we are not aware of it. But be prepared by loving him!

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

### Daily Readings

**Monday, November 8**

Wisdom 1:1-7; Luke 17:1-6

**Tuesday, November 9**

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:9-11

**Wednesday, November 10**

Wisdom 6:1-11; Luke 17:11-19

**Thursday, November 11**

Wisdom 7:22-8:1; Luke 17:20-25

**Friday, November 12**

Wisdom 13:1-9; Luke 17:26-37

**Saturday, November 13**

Wisdom 18:14-16, 19:6-9; Luke 18:1-8

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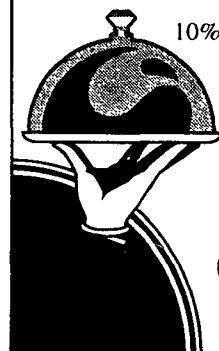
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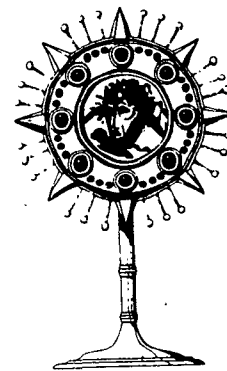
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