

WORLD & NATION

Father Richard McCormick, noted theologian, dies

CLARKSTON, Mich. (CNS) — Jesuit Father Richard A. McCormick, 77, a leading U.S. Catholic moral theologian of the 20th century, died of respiratory failure Feb. 12.

Following a severe stroke last June he had moved to the Colombiere Center, a Jesuit retirement and health care center in Clarkston.

He was to be buried Feb. 17 at Calvary Cemetery in Toledo, Ohio, his hometown, after a funeral Mass at Gesu Church there.

A specialist in medical ethics, from the 1960s through the 1980s Father McCormick was one of the key figures in scores of far-reaching ethical debates over new medical technology, especially in the genetic, reproductive and end-of-life areas.

A prolific author and popular lecturer, he spent most of his teaching and research career in moral theology at three institutions: Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago (1957-74), Georgetown University (1974-86) and the University of Notre Dame (1986-99).

"Clearly he was one of the — if not the — premier Roman Catholic moral theo-

logians of the last half of the 20th century, and that's speaking modestly," said Mercy Sister Margaret Farley, professor of Christian ethics at Yale University Divinity School and president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

"He was certainly one of the most influential moral theologians in this country," said William E. May, a former member of the International Theological Commission who teaches at the Pope John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Washington.

Father McCormick was author, 1966-84, and a co-author, 1985-87, of "Notes on Moral Theology," a thematic survey of current moral theology literature in several languages that appeared each year in Theological Studies.

May said he often disagreed with Father McCormick, but the Jesuit theologian's "Notes on Moral Theology" were "required reading for moral theologians" and "a valuable service to the theological community."

Sister Farley said the "Notes" will con-

tinue to have significant historical value.

While Father McCormick regularly addressed the most controversial moral issues of the day, "he was never into waving red flags," she said. "His positions were always carefully thought through."

Born in Toledo Oct. 3, 1922, Richard A. McCormick entered the Detroit province of the Society of Jesus in 1940.

He was ordained a priest in 1953 after studies at Loyola University in Chicago and West Baden College in West Baden Springs, Ind., a Loyola affiliate.

He earned licentiates in philosophy and theology from West Baden, a bachelor's degree and a master's in English from Loyola, and his doctorate in theology from the Gregorian University in Rome in 1957.

He taught at West Baden, 1957-64, and the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago, 1964-73.

In 1973 he moved to Washington as Rose F. Kennedy professor of Christian ethics at Georgetown University's Kennedy Center for Bioethics, and the following year he was named one of the first permanent researchers of the university's newly formed Woodstock Theological Center, where he remained until 1986.

Particularly during his years in Washington, he became a significant public figure in the emerging field of bioethics, where new medical techniques of fertilization, genetic selection, genetic manipulation and preservation of life at its end stages posed a host of new moral and ethical issues.

In 1980 he published "How Brave a New World/Dilemmas in Bioethics," a 440-page set of essays on current bioethical issues.

In 1986 he moved to the University of Notre Dame as John A. O'Brien professor of Christian ethics, a post he held until last year.

He earned numerous academic honors and awards, including the first honorary doctorate conferred on an American theologian by the University of Louvain in Belgium.

When the first 15 years of his "Notes on Moral Theology" were published in an 892-page book in 1981, Msgr. George G. Higgins, a veteran Catholic social justice leader, wrote, "Father Richard McCormick ranks at the very top of the list, among all his peers in the American theological fraternity, in his mastery of the art of scholarly dialogue."



Reuters/CNS

Vatican-Palestinian agreement

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat presents a gift to Pope John Paul II during their meeting at the Vatican Feb. 15. The Vatican and the Palestinian Liberation Organization signed an agreement saying both view any unilateral decision affecting Jerusalem's special character as morally and legally unacceptable.

Fr. Richard McBrien says he won't pursue mandate

NEW YORK (CNS) — One of the nation's most widely known Catholic theologians has said he will not seek the mandate to teach that soon may be applied to professors on Catholic theological faculties in the United States.

Father Richard P. McBrien, former theology department chairman at the University of Notre Dame and a nationally known author and media commentator on Catholic issues, said in the Feb. 12 issue of America magazine, "I do not intend to seek a mandate. ... For me it is a matter of principle."

The requirement of a mandate from the proper church authority to teach Catholic theology appears in the 1983 Code of Canon Law and in Pope John Paul II's 1990 apostolic constitution on Catholic higher education, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" ("From the Heart of the Church").

Application of the mandate in the United States was a topic of intense debate over the past decade as the U.S. bishops worked on norms applying *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to U.S. Catholic colleges and univer-

sities. Their norms, adopted last November, are currently awaiting final approval in Rome.

Father McBrien, 63, said his opposition to the mandate is a matter "not of defiance toward the Vatican or the bishops, but of an abiding commitment to the academic integrity of what are among the church's most precious and valuable assets."

He rejected the argument of some that the mandate is needed to prevent Catholic universities from losing their Catholic identity and asked why, if the mandate is considered necessary, it applies only to theologians and not to the rest of the university's faculty and administration.

"If there is an erosion of Catholic identity in our universities today, it is more likely to occur outside of departments of theology, not inside," he said.

"Nowhere is the challenge of defining and maintaining Catholic character taken with greater seriousness and made the object of greater corporate commitment than in these very departments."

Although the mandate was one of the most contentious issues in the development of application norms, during consultations of bishops with academic leaders over the norms "theologians have been left completely out of the loop," he said.

The bishops have said they plan to consult with theologians in drawing up specific procedures for conferring or withdrawing a mandate, which are not spelled out in the implementation norms.

Father McBrien said the theologians chosen to take part in that consultation should be selected by the officers and directors of the Catholic Theological Society of America, "certainly not by the bishops; nor should the bishops have the power of veto over those selected."



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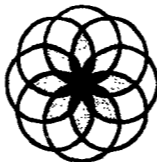
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