

COLUMNISTS

In memoriam: Richard A. McCormick, SJ

My friend and colleague, Richard A. McCormick, SJ, died on Feb. 12 at Colomiere Center, a Jesuit health care facility in Clarkston, Mich., where he had resided for the past five months following a major stroke last June. He was 77.

Father McCormick was a world-renowned Catholic moral theologian and the church's leading medical- and bio-ethicist. He was John A. O'Brien Professor Emeritus of Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame. His last public appearance was a widely reported discussion of the limits of theological dissent with fellow Jesuit, Avery Dulles, at the annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

During his long and distinguished career, Father McCormick wrote and edited some twenty books, including *Notes on Moral Theology*, a collection of his highly influential reviews of the literature in moral theology, which appeared regularly in the Jesuit quarterly *Theological Studies* between 1965 and 1984.

His monographs included *Health and Medicine in the Catholic Tradition* (1984), *The Crucial Calling: Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II* (1989), and *Corrective Vision: Explorations in Moral Theology* (1994). He also edited, with Father Charles Curran, eleven volumes of *Readings in Moral Theology*. His many articles appeared in



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

scholarly and popular publications.

Father McCormick was a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America and winner of its Cardinal Spellman Award in 1969. The Hastings Center conferred on him the Henry Knowles Beecher Award in 1988 for "lifetime contributions to ethics and the life sciences." He also received 15 honorary degrees, including one from Louvain University in 1986, and in 1990 was elected to membership in the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Father McCormick was one of a handful of theologians who placed his scholarship at the service of a wider public. He was accessible to the media and was in constant demand as a lecturer, especially for medical and health-care audiences. His interest in medicine could be

traced back to the example and influence of his father, the late Edward J. McCormick, M.D., who served as president of the American Medical Association.

I had the honor of preaching at Father McCormick's funeral Mass at the Gesu Church in Toledo, noting that he had been an integral and beloved member of at least three families at the time of his death.

The first was the McCormick family itself: his sisters, Carol, Kathleen and Mary Jo; his brothers-in-law; his recently widowed sister-in-law; and 68 nieces and nephews, and grandnieces and grand-nephews. Father McCormick baptized so many of them that he referred to himself as "Richard the Baptist."

His second family was the Society of Jesus, which he entered some 60 years ago. He was a faithful and devoted Jesuit, and it was fitting that the offertory meditation at the funeral Mass was taken from a prayer in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. It was a prayer that Father McCormick frequently recited and lived by: "Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, understanding, my entire will... You have given all to me, now I return it."

Richard McCormick always looked for places and opportunities where he

could do "the greater good" and be of the greatest service to the church, focusing his intellectual and pastoral talents on new and different issues as they arose.

The University of Notre Dame was Father McCormick's third family, at least for the last 14 years of his life. Even in his severely disabled condition over the past 7½ months, he never lost the hope that he would one day return to Notre Dame, if only for one more football weekend. He left many friends behind, not only there but in the South Bend community as well.

As a final light touch, one of his sisters arranged to have the Notre Dame fight song played after the recessional hymn. She thought her brother would have liked that. I knew she was right.

The first reading at the funeral Mass, from the Book of Sirach, caught the significance of Richard McCormick as a theologian, Jesuit priest and committed disciple of Christ:

"Unfading will be his memory, through all generations his name will live, peoples will speak of his wisdom, and in assembly sing his praises. While he lives he is one of a thousand, and when he dies his renown will not cease."

...

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

Turning inkblots into angels

First Sunday of Lent (March 12): (R3) Mark 1:12-15. (R1) Genesis 9:8-15. (R2) 1 Peter 3:18-22.

Out of Scotland comes a story about a man named Joseph Craik. Years ago he became known all over Scotland as "the man who turns inkblots into angels." Joseph Craik could write and draw beautifully. He was writing master in a village school in Scotland. Often, his young pupils would leave inkblots on their pages. While most teachers would chastise the students, circling the inkblots in graphic red and taking away points for sloppy penmanship, Joseph Craik would add a line here and another there, and out of the inkblots would come pictures of angels!

So, when the students were given back their papers, they were wonderfully decorated with exquisite angels! The children were delighted and pleased and encouraged. And Joseph Craik became a legend in his own time, turning inkblots into angels!

Well, I think, we all know Another who can turn inkblots into angels, who can turn rain clouds into rainbows, who can take a life that has been nearly beaten down and bring joy into it.

That Other is the God of Noah. Noah trusted him, so ought we! The waters of



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

baptism are a reminder of the waters that engulfed the earth in the time of Noah. Baptism, like the rainbow, is our reminder that we are part of a covenant relationship with the Creator. Even when the waters of life flood around us, we will not be forgotten.

Rainbows follow floods. Rainbows speak of hope. There is a Gaelic blessing of friendship that goes like this:

May there always be work for your hands to do.

May your purse always hold a coin or two.

May the sun always shine warm on your windowpane.

May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain.

The rainbow teaches us to hope. The Gospel teaches us to resist temptation,

knowing that we become stronger when we do. The more we give in, the weaker we become; the more we resist, the stronger we become.

In C.S. Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the wicked witch entices the boy, Edmund, with a box of enchanted Turkish Delight. Each piece is sweet and delicious, and Edmund has never tasted anything better. The more he eats, the more he will want, and thus he will eat and eat until it kills him.

Lewis is giving us a metaphor for sin. It never satisfies, it only enslaves. Dag Hammarskjöld wrote: "You cannot play with the animal in you without becoming wholly animal; you cannot play with falsehood without forfeiting your right to truth; you cannot play with cruelty without losing your sensitivity of mind. He who wants to keep his garden tidy, doesn't reserve a plot for weeds."

Fortunately, the more times we resist the Tempter, the weaker he becomes. Anyone who has ever begun an exercise program or gone on a diet or tried to quit smoking knows that the hardest part is getting started. The longer one waits to begin, the harder it is to start. And it is possible to put off trying so long that the chances for success grow very, very slim. Jesus nipped temptation in the

bud. He said, "No!", from the very beginning - and so should we.

Like Jesus, we are never alone in confronting the devil. The Psalmist proclaims, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

As God was with Noah through the storm, so he is always with us no matter how fierce the storm may be! Trust him.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, March 13

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18;
Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday, March 14

Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15

Wednesday, March 15

Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32

Thursday, March 16

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25;
Matthew 7:7-12

Friday, March 17

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26

Saturday, March 18

Deuteronomy 26:16-19;
Matthew 5:43-48

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