

# COLUMNISTS

## Memory gap widens between young and old

Catholics between the ages of 18 and 25 do not represent a significant percentage of this column's readership, nor indeed of the papers in which the column is published. How to communicate effectively with this vast and highly significant audience is one of the greatest challenges facing the leadership of the church today.

Part of the problem may lie in the differences between the historical memories and experiences of younger Catholics and those of older generations.

Last fall the staff at Beloit College in Wisconsin put together its annual list to help the faculty better understand the mind-set of the incoming students, born in 1982. Some examples follow:

- They have no meaningful recollection of the Reagan era.
- They were 11 when the Soviet Union broke apart, do not remember the Cold War, and have never feared a nuclear war.
- They are too young to remember the space shuttle blowing up.
- Tianamen Square means nothing to them.
- Their lifetime has always included AIDS.
- As far as they know, stamps have always cost about 33 cents.



essays in  
theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

- Most have never seen a TV set with only 13 channels and do not know what UHF or VHF means.
  - They cannot fathom having a TV set without remote control.
  - Jay Leno has always been on "The Tonight Show".
  - The Vietnam War is as ancient history to them as the Civil War, World War I, and World War II.
  - They have no idea that Americans were ever held hostage in Iran.
  - There has always been MTV.
- Such a list could be expanded for young Catholics entering college or the work force for the first time last fall.
- They have known only one pope and could not name the one he succeeded.
  - The Second Vatican Council is as much ancient history to them as the

Council of Trent.

- They have no memory of the Latin Mass, nor of the distinction between a low Mass and a high Mass.
- Women have always been readers and eucharistic ministers at Mass.
- Nuns have always worn ordinary clothes.
- Communion has always been distributed in the hand.
- They have never seen a Communion rail.
- They have no idea what a biretta is.
- They have never kissed a bishop's ring.
- They never made the nine First Fridays.
- They were never struck by their father after he got home from work and learned that they did something to provoke a nun into slapping them.
- They never tipped their hats or crossed their foreheads when passing a church, nor pinned a handkerchief to their hair if they forgot to wear a hat to church.
- They never marched in a May procession.
- They have no memory of the original debate over contraception in the church, and have no idea how anyone could be opposed to birth control.

• They know at least one Catholic who has been divorced and remarried without church approval and they see no problem with it.

- With rare exceptions, they do not know the name of their bishop.
- They have never worn a cassock and surplice to serve Mass.
- They have never had to ask permission to read a book not approved by the church.
- They have never heard of the Fighting 69th and its campaign to help Catholic teenagers keep the Sixth and Ninth Commandments.
- They have never been in a confessional box.
- They have no idea what scrupulosity means.
- They have never checked Legion of Decency ratings in a diocesan newspaper to see if a movie is "Condemned."
- They see mostly "R" rated films.
- They never think of Hell.
- They have never ransomed a pagan baby nor contributed to a spiritual bouquet.
- They never read their diocesan newspaper, perhaps never saw a copy.

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

## Ten Commandments, with God's love, lead us

Third Sunday of Lent (March 26): (R3) John 2:13-25. (R1) Exodus 20:1-17. (R2) 1 Corinthians 1:22-25.

Three great religions of the world — Judaism, Islam, Christianity — have at their heart the sacred laws of God which we know as the Ten Commandments.

The commandments are the foundation for civilized behavior. The first three are concerned with man's duties toward God and the last seven with his duties toward humanity.

In 1965, Sandy Koufax — a Jewish pitcher with a sling like David's for a left arm — announced that he would not play on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of his year. The Los Angeles Dodgers respectfully pointed out that this was the first game of the World Series. Couldn't he pitch just a little? "No," Koufax said. Later in the Series, however, Koufax pitched shutouts in games five and seven. The Dodgers won the Series 4-3.

Eli Herring, a 340-pound offensive tackle for Brigham Young University went one step further. In his senior year Herring was a top tackle in the pro draft. A devout Mormon, he turned down a possible multimillion-dollar deal with the Oakland Raiders because he, too, would not play on a holy day. Un-



a word  
for  
sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

fortunately, his holy day, Sunday, comes up once a week, just when the Raiders go to work.

Herring meditated intensely over his dilemma. He could sign with the NFL, play ball on Sundays and fill his life with fancy cars and houses, or he could teach for \$20,000 a year and honor the Sunday. Herring chose the latter.

Two true stories: one about a Jew, the other about a Mormon. Their example ought to cause us to stop and think about how we treat the Lord's Day. Far too many people profane God's name and desecrate his Sunday.

Someone asked, "What is it about human nature that makes it easier to break a commandment than a habit?" The steady decline in ethical and moral stan-

dards among all strata of society in America is alarming.

Some say the decline began in the 1960s when social morality began displacing personal morality. The pendulum swung from personal accountability to compassion, from keeping the commandments to having a strong social conscience. The results were predictable. Divorces and out-of-wedlock births soared. Ethics in business declined.

Still, there are people who stand for personal integrity. Back in 1994 golfer David Love III called a one-stroke penalty on himself during the second round of the Western Open. He had moved his ball on a green to get it out of another player's putting line. Later, he could not remember if he had moved his ball back to its original spot. Unsure, Love gave himself an extra stroke and that one stroke caused him to miss the cut. He was out of the tournament.

That year Love was \$590 short of automatically qualifying for the following year's Masters. However, the week before the 1995 Masters, Love won a tournament and qualified. In the Masters, he finished second, earning \$237,600.

Keeping the commandments requires some deep commitments. They

are, however, not enough for Christian behavior. When Jesus was asked to cite the great commandment, he did not mention any of the Ten. He simply said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself." The Ten Commandments tell us what we are not to do. But that is not enough for living the Christ life. Besides morality, we need love — of God and others.

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

### Daily Readings

Monday, March 27

2 Kings 5:1-15; Luke 4:24-30

Tuesday, March 28

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35

Wednesday, March 29

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9;

Matthew 5:17-19

Thursday, March 30

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23

Friday, March 31

Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34

Saturday, April 1

Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14

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