

COLUMNISTS

Noted Jesuit theologian is remembered

Feb. 12 is the first anniversary of Richard McCormick's death. I miss him every time I drive by the university-owned house he occupied for more than a dozen years at the edge of campus.

I miss his wise counsel and encouragement. I miss his playful sense of humor, often punctuated by his signature word, "Shocking!" I miss his stories about life during the war years at the Jesuit seminary in West Baden, Indiana.

I miss kibitzing with him about sports, especially golf, Notre Dame football, and the Chicago Bulls (when they were still great). I miss our dinners together at the university club, and his famed Jesuit stew (laced with brandy) and corn bread.

I miss his clear and insightful articles in *America* and other leading Catholic journals. And I miss his presence to the church that he served so long and so faithfully as a Jesuit priest and a world-class moral theologian.

At the time of his death at age 77, Richard McCormick was John A. O'Brien Professor Emeritus of Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame. He had suffered a major stroke the previous June during carotid artery surgery. The stroke left him with significant paralysis and severely compromised his ability to read and write.



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

Born on Oct. 3, 1922, he entered the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio, on Aug. 31, 1940. He liked to recall how the novice master took him and his parents down to the cemetery to underscore the significance of that day, noting the date would be chiseled on his grave stone. His parents were not impressed.

He was ordained in 1953, receiving his doctorate in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1957. Before his appointment to Notre Dame in 1986, he was the Rose F. Kennedy Professor of Christian Ethics at Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics. From 1957 to 1973, he was professor of moral theology at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago.

During his long, distinguished career, Father McCormick wrote and edited

some 20 books, including *Notes on Moral Theology*, a collection of his influential reviews of the literature in moral theology, which appeared in the Jesuit quarterly *Theological Studies* (1965-1984). He also edited, with Father Charles Curran, 11 volumes of *Readings in Moral Theology*.

Father McCormick was past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America and won its Cardinal Spellman Award in 1969 as "Outstanding Theologian of the Year." In 1988 he received the Henry Knowles Beecher Award from the Hastings Center for "lifetime contributions to ethics and the life sciences."

He also received some 15 honorary degrees, including one from Louvain University in 1986, and in 1990 was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Father McCormick was one of a handful of Catholic theologians who placed their scholarship at the service of a wider public, inside and outside the church. He was quoted regularly in the secular and Catholic press, and appeared on various national television programs to interpret the latest developments in bio-ethics.

He was in demand as a lecturer, especially for medical and health-care audiences. His interest in medicine came from his father, the late Edward J. Mc-

Cormick, M.D., who served as president of the American Medical Association.

Although Richard McCormick was one of the most dedicated and accomplished Catholic theologians of the 20th century, he was a humble, self-effacing person with simple human interests. He took particular delight, for example, in watching re-runs of the British comedy program, "Are You Being Served?"

He attended Notre Dame's home games on most autumn Saturdays — right on the 50-yard line — and loved to "tail-gate" with his family from Ohio, with whom he was very close to the end.

Richard McCormick had a host of friends from all walks of life, for whom he had been a wise and generous counselor, and an unfailing source of affirmation and support.

His passing last February was that of a theological giant on the order of an Yves Congar or a Karl Rahner. Relatively few others would have been more deserving of the title, doctor of the church. Had Richard McCormick lived, he, too, would have merited the Cardinal's red hat.

May his name, achievements, and spirit never fade from our memories.

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

Beatitudes illustrate way to eternal happiness

6th Sunday of the Year (Feb. 11): (R3) Luke 6:17, 20-26; (R1) Jeremiah 17:5-8; (R2) 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20.

The first reading and the Gospel of next Sunday focus on the beatitudes.

The word "beatitude" means happiness. It is significant that Jesus began his public life with the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). It was his way of telling us that the goal of the Christian religion is happiness. God made us for happiness.

When God created the first man and woman, he put them in a world that was a paradise, a Garden of Eden. And he told our first parents how to keep their happiness. But they didn't listen. By their disobedience, their willfulness, their listening to the father of lies and not to God, they opened a Pandora's box of evils and let loose upon the world the sadness, sickness, suffering and death that now afflict mankind.

So God the Father sent his Son into the world to put us once again on the right path to happiness.

St. Matthew was a bookkeeper. He was very orderly. Thus he collected all the sayings of Jesus in one place, namely, in the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7). The Sermon on the Mount was not a single sermon. Matthew begins it with



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

the eight beatitudes. St. Luke has only four beatitudes and four woes.

St. Matthew was writing for the Jews, so he has Jesus giving the beatitudes on a mountain, for he was presenting Jesus to the Jews as the new Moses, giving a new Law. He has him giving them only to his disciples — the chosen people.

St. Luke, on the contrary, writing for the Gentiles, has Jesus giving the beatitudes on a plain, down to earth. And he has Jesus speaking to everyone, not just to the Jews. Luke, an apostle of Paul, taught that Jesus had come to save everybody, not just the chosen people.

The beatitudes are a series of bombshells. They are like flashes of lightning followed by the thunder of surprise. Literally, Jesus took the standards of the

world and turned them upside down. Whom the world calls happy, Jesus calls wretched. Whom Jesus calls happy, the world calls wretched.

Fundamentally, what is Jesus saying? The key is the verse, "Woe to you rich, for your consolation is now." What Jesus meant is, "If you set your heart and head, all your energies, on just what the world values — riches, feasting, drinking, being merry and popular — you'll get all these; you may go places, but that's all you'll get. Your consolation is now, not hereafter." In other words, you've had it!

On the other hand, he is saying, "If you set your heart and head, all your energies, on what Christ values, you'll run into all kinds of trouble. By the world's standards, you'll be unhappy but according to God's standards, you will have inner peace, love and joy here, and an eternal reward hereafter."

In other words, life is a choice between the way of the world or the way of Jesus.

The world's way is the easy way, the way of instant gratification, the way of the least line of resistance. It is the wide way, the primrose path to destruction.

The way of Christ is the hard way. To St. Bernadette, Mary said, "I do not promise you happiness here but here-

after." It is the narrow way: the way of the cross. But it is the way to peace and glory. Through the cross to the light, through bitter paths to the stars. No thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory; no pain, no palm; no cross, no crown.

Are we going to listen to the world and its lies, as our first parents did? Or to Jesus and his promises, as the saints did?

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

Daily Readings

Monday, February 12
Genesis 4:1-15, 25; Mark 8:11-13
Tuesday, February 13
Genesis 6:5-8, 7:1-5, 10;
Mark 8:14-21
Wednesday, February 14
Genesis 8:6-13, 20-22;
Mark 8:22-26
Thursday, February 15
Genesis 9:1-13; Mark 8:27-33
Friday, February 16
Genesis 11:1-9; Mark 8:34-9:1
Saturday, February 17
Hebrews 11:1-7; Mark 9:2-13

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