

COLUMNISTS

Social teachings apply equally to church

Because the church believes itself to be the Body of Christ, the People of God, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, it has a higher obligation than any other community, organization or institution to practice what it preaches and teaches about justice and human rights.

Labor Day is an annual occasion for the church in the United States to re-examine its record in implementing Catholic social teachings. The few references in those teachings to the church's own responsibility to live up to them are powerfully explicit and direct.

The key text is in the Third World Synod of Bishops' document, "Justice in the World" (1971), an entire chapter of which is devoted to "The Practice of Justice."

"While the Church is bound to give witness to justice," the document states, "it recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life style found within the Church itself."

The synodal document continues: "Within the Church rights must be preserved. No one should be deprived of her or his ordinary rights because she or he is associated with the Church in one way or another. Those who serve the



essays in
theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

Church by their labor, including priests and religious, should receive a sufficient livelihood and enjoy that social security which is customary in their region.

"Lay people should be given fair wages and a system for promotion. ... We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church."

In 1975, Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ("On Evangelization in the Modern World"), in which he insisted that the "first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life."

"Modern man," he contended, "listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. ...

"It is therefore primarily by its conduct and by its life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by its living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus — the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity" (n. 41).

In 1986, the U.S. Catholic bishops retrieved the teaching of the Third World Synod for their own pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy."

The key sentence in the pastoral is rendered in italics: "All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the Church should be exemplary" (n. 347). The document's key paragraph already given above ("While the Church is bound to give witness to justice ...") is repeated.

The bishops committed themselves to "the principle that those who serve the Church — laity, clergy, and religious — should receive a sufficient livelihood and the social benefits provided by responsible employers in our nation" (n. 351).

"All church institutions must also fully recognize the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively with the institution. ... (W)e challenge our church

institutions to adopt new, fruitful modes of cooperation [in relations between labor and management]. ...

"In seeking greater justice in wages, we recognize the need to be particularly alert to the continuing discrimination against women throughout Church and society, especially reflected in both the inequities of salaries between women and men and in the concentration of women in jobs at the lower end of the wage scale" (n. 353).

These are the explicit teachings to which the Catholic Church has committed itself. The question is: Are these teachings being faithfully observed?

The answers can come only from those who depend upon these jobs for their very livelihood: directors of religious education, youth ministers, pastoral associates, directors of liturgy, parochial school teachers, diocesan newspaper editors and reporters, social service agency personnel, nurses and other hospital support staff, from the most highly skilled to the unskilled.

Does the Catholic Church practice what it preaches? Let me hear from you so I can tell your stories in future columns.

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

True humility is obedience to God's will

22nd Sunday of the Year (Sept. 2): (R3) Luke 14:1, 7-14; (R1) Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; (R2) Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24.

Our Lord's parable next Sunday illustrates an eternal truth. "Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Humility has always been one of the inevitable characteristics of great people. Sirach said, "Son, conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts." Nobody loves snobs, proud people, or the "me first" types like those in the parable trying to grab the top-seats at the banquet table.

Down-to-earth people generally joke about those who think they are God Almighty. One jokester said of an egotistical friend, "Did you hear that Joe had an accident? He got hit by a motorboat while out walking."

St. Augustine was asked, "What is the first, most basic virtue for Christians?" Augustine answered, "Humility."

"And the second?" Again Augustine replied, "Humility."

"And the third?" The same answer, "Humility."

Humility is the fundamental virtue of the spiritual life. It is not servility, grov-



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

eling in the dust. Nor is it timidity, being a doormat for people to walk on.

Humility, first of all, is truth. It is not a horizontal virtue: sizing up yourself in relation to your neighbor. It is a vertical virtue, that is, it looks at self in relation to God. The truly humble person realizes who God is and who he himself is.

The word "humility" comes from the Latin word *humus* meaning "ground." A humble man is one who has his feet on the ground. He is no dreamer, but a realist. He knows exactly who he is in reference to God.

However, truth is not all there is to humility. Knowledge alone is never virtue. To know is not necessarily to be good. Not every Ph.D. is a saint. Truth is only half of it; the other half is to admit the

truth. Virtue is in the will. Humility is obedience to God's will.

When the angel Gabriel came to Mary, she said she was the handmaid of the Lord. But that was not her humility. Her humility was in her acting according to the truth. Mary was humble because she said, "Be it done unto me according to your word."

The Son of God was humble not because he emptied himself and took the form of a servant. Jesus was humble because he became obedient to his Father even to death on a cross.

We can do nothing by ourselves. What we have, we have received. But knowing that does not make us humble. We are humble if we act on this truth. We have frequent recourse to God through prayer and the sacraments. To try and go it on our own is pride.

St. Paul said, "What have you that you have not received and, if you have received it, why do you glory as though you have not received it?" The truly humble man goes to Sunday Mass to say "Thank you, God, for all you have given me."

God asked us to love everyone. If I think I'm so much better than others, if I spurn them, am insensitive to them, hurt them, am indifferent to them, then

I am not a humble person but one filled with pride.

Pride says, "I don't need God. I can go it on my own." The humble man says, "I need God and without him I can do nothing."

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

Daily Readings

Monday, September 3

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Psalms 96:1, 3-5, 11-13; Luke 4:16-30

Tuesday, September 4

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 9-11; Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14; Luke 4:31-37

Wednesday, September 5

Colossians 1:1-8; Psalms 52:10-11; Luke 4:38-44

Thursday, September 6

Colossians 1:9-14; Psalms 98:2-6; Luke 5:1-11

Friday, September 7

Colossians 1:15-20; Psalms 100:2-5; Luke 5:33-39

Saturday, September 8

Micah 5:1-4A or Romans 8:28-30; Psalms 13:6; Matthew 1:1-16, 18-23 or 1:18-23

THE HURLBUT Three Generations of Caring

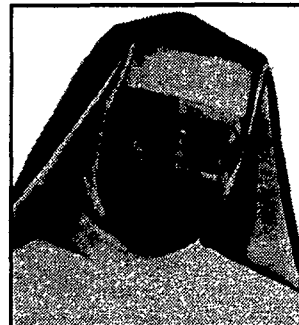
We are a full service medical facility providing the following services for the comfort of our patients, residents, and guests.

We Provide:

- Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services for Short Term Stays on our Rehabilitation Unit
- Specialized Care Services in the form of: Infusion Therapy, Wound Care and Management, Tracheostomy, Colostomy, Ileostomy, and Gastrostomy Tube Care, Hospice Care
- Skilled Nursing Care and Rehabilitation for those in need of Long Term Care Placement
- Physical, Occupational, Speech/Language Therapy

Admissions and Tours Available
7 Days a Week

1177 E. Henrietta Rd. Rochester, NY 14623
(716) 424-4770 • Fax (716) 424-1922



Evergreen Tours Presents Mother Angelica at EWTN

Birmingham, Alabama

October 1st-6th, 2001

\$545.00 per person/d.o.

Please call with any questions:

LINDA ZALESKI 716.544.4694

Watch for
**Great Travel
Destinations**
in the September
13 issue

Paint Problems Solved!
CALL "DR. PAINT"
Shaheen Problem Hot Line
266-1525
Shaheen's
PAINT & DECORATING CENTERS INC.
"Over 50 Years of Great Advice"

Pregnant? Need Help?
Catholic Family Center's Pregnancy Hotline
CALL 1-800-CARE-002
25 Franklin Street • Sibley Tower Building, 7th Floor
Rochester, New York 14604-1007 • 716-546-7220
www.cfcrochester.org