

COLUMNISTS

The 'moment of silence' is powerful prayer

Whenever there is a major tragedy, with great loss of life, a familiar response is a call for a moment of silence in remembrance of the dead and of the loved ones left behind. In a religiously diverse country like the United States, such a response is both practical and appropriate.

Silence should not be regarded, however, as a poor substitute for vocal prayer. On the contrary, it is one of the most traditional and spiritually durable forms of prayer in liturgical assemblies and in the lives of individual people of faith.

The brief entry on "silence" in the HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism underscores this point. Silence, it says, "is essential for concentration, awareness, self-understanding, and prayer life. Deep silence aids recollection and makes possible the primarily receptive prayer that ripens spiritual life."

"Ultimately, silence is being still in order to know God."

Our communal response to the unspeakably horrific events of Sept. 11, in which thousands of innocent people were summarily murdered — on-board planes, in the majestic twin towers of New York's World Trade Center, and at the Pentagon — has taken various forms.

Masses and other prayer services have been held. Millions of people found



essays in
theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

themselves overcome by unimaginable grief, benumbed by the enormity of the events, gripped by fear of the lengthening tentacles of terrorism, shocked and angered by the brazenness of the assault against the world's mightiest power, and profoundly saddened and shaken by the loss of life and its cruel repercussions for so many thousands of families.

There were countless songs, sermons, and liturgical gestures, each drawing from the wellsprings of their distinctive religious traditions.

For Christians, the themes were predictable and apt: the denial of death's ultimate power over us; hope rooted in the Resurrection; the promise of eternal life and reunion of loved ones in the communion of saints; the need to reach out in loving care and concern for those

most directly affected; insistence that justice, not revenge, is the way to peace; warnings against retaliation against the innocent because of their ethnicity, national origin and Muslim religion; and the call for reconciliation and forgiveness.

On Friday, George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual leader of some 80 million Anglicans worldwide, preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, at a national service attended by the queen, the prime minister and other government officials, the American ambassador and thousands of other Americans in England at the time.

"True faith," the archbishop declared, "is never overcome by disasters of this kind. There is something unconquerable about the faith we share. With St. Paul we trust that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers ... nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

"And even in the darkest hour," he continued, "such faith in God gives birth to hope. So ... let us declare the hopeful words of the prophet Isaiah, first spoken at a time of disaster and despair in the life of his own people: 'They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair

the ruined cities ...'"

Similarly eloquent, faith-filled words were spoken in many places, by many preachers, great and obscure alike. In the final analysis the most compelling prayer may have been one of silence.

The late Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner noted some 35 years ago that, according to Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (n. 39), we have been given an important collaborative role in the coming of the kingdom of God at the end of history.

Rahner acknowledged, however, that it is impossible for us to understand how our own weak, imperfect human efforts can effectively interact with God's infinite power. He referred to the relationship between the two as a "dialectic."

"In this dialectic — insoluble for us — God's absolute future perhaps shows itself in silent presence," he concluded.

As we confront anew the continuing dialectic between God's infinite goodness and our human capacity for evil, God is disclosed to us "in silent presence."

It is a time, therefore, for stillness as well as for words and action.

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

Are we rich in things or rich with God?

25th Sunday of the Year (Sept. 23): (R3) Luke 16:1-13; (R1) Amos 8:4-7; (R2) 1 Timothy 2:1-8.

Jesus once told a humorous parable about a wealthy man who had a shrewd, clever manager working for him. Word reached the wealthy man that his manager was "dissipating his property." "What's this I hear about you?" the wealthy man asked. "Give me an account of your service, for I'm firing you."

"What'll I do now?" the manager asked himself. "I can't dig. I'm ashamed to beg." Then he hit on an idea: I'll do a favor for my boss' customers. Then they will take me in when I'm let go."

So he called in each of his master's debtors and reduced their bills. When the landowner found out what his manager had done, he commended the clever manager "for being enterprising." Perhaps he would give his manager a second chance and, given this, he would no longer squander his master's property.

Jesus was not commending the manager for being dishonest. He simply wanted us to use our heads as the manager had.

For one thing he wants us to examine the way we treat material things. Do we use them to gain heaven or do we let



a word
for
sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

them use us? Sometimes, possessions can get in our way and prevent us from being the person Christ calls us to be. Do we give our very best to God or do we use our money only for ourselves?

The American novelist Ernest Hemingway used to give away some of his possessions at the beginning of each January. He gave them away to demonstrate that he owned them; they did not own him. Jesus wants us also to examine our relationship to our material possessions.

Furthermore, the parable teaches us to think of the future. In a time of personal crisis the crooked manager didn't think about how good he once had it. No, he planned for the day when he would have no job, no food and no place to live. The shrewd manager considered

what the future had in store for him and decided he had to act in a creative way.

Wise people today know there is very little security anymore. Jobs can be lost, pension plans can be robbed. Who knows how long Social Security will last? Anybody who doesn't plan carefully for the future is foolish indeed.

Our Lord found many people living as though the world was going to be their home forever. They never looked beyond the present. The crooked manager looked ahead. So should we. Are we rich in things or rich with God?

Finally, in telling this parable Jesus wants his followers to show as much intelligence in using the things of this world as the manager did in looking out for his own interests. The crooked manager was commended for his creative thinking. It was a win-win-win situation. Everyone was a winner in the end. The manager not only had people in his debt but also the praise of his master. The debtors were happy because of their debt reductions. The wealthy landowner was happy because his debtors looked upon him as a generous man.

Our Lord was not praising the manager's dishonesty but his cleverness in facing a critical situation. So Jesus

wants us to look at the future — our future — beyond the present. He wants us to give to our situations the same kind of attention as the crooked manager gave his.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, September 24

Ezra 1:1-6; Psalms 126:1-6;
Luke 8:16-18

Tuesday, September 25

Ezra 6:7-8, 12B, 14-20; Psalms
122:1-5; Luke 8:19-21

Wednesday, September 26

Ezra 9:5-9; (Ps) Tobit 13:2-5, 8;
Luke 9:1-6

Thursday, September 27

Haggai 1:1-8; Psalms 149:1-6A, 9B;
Luke 9:7-9

Friday, September 28

Haggai 1:15B-2:9; Psalms 43:1-4;
Luke 9:18-22

Saturday, September 29

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation
12:7-12A; Psalms 138:1-5;
John 1:47-51

**"IF YOU'VE MADE A WILL,
THERE'S ONE MORE
THING TO DO..."**

make your PreNeed or
Medicaid arrangements with us."



Crawford
FUNERAL HOME INC.



716-482-0400

495 N. Winton Rd. • Rochester, NY 14610

**DON'T ALLOW THE IRS TO BE THE
BENEFICIARY OF YOUR IRA!**

Attend a **FREE** seminar and learn about:

- How the IRS's **New** distribution rules effect you.
- Who should and should **not** be your IRA beneficiary
- How to create a family legacy
- Your 401(k) and tax time bombs
- How to take tax-free money out of your IRA

Please call **295-6005** for a schedule or personal consultation.

**ROCHESTER
WEALTH
ALLIANCE**

DAVID B. OLTMANN, CHFC
INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVISOR

1100 University Ave • Suite 214 • Rochester, NY 14607
www.rochesterwealth.com



Securities offered through Wall Street Financial Group • Member NASD SIPC Rochester, NY (716) 442-7560