

COLUMNISTS

Ordaining priests and bishops: Whose call?

The current turmoil generated by the scandal of sexual abuse in the priesthood may be the most serious crisis the Catholic Church has faced in modern times. And no one should be under any illusions. The crisis is international in scope.

While no one can predict how it will all come out (one indeed hopes and prays that the church will somehow emerge from this tragedy even stronger than before), it is a safe guess that systemic changes of some kind will follow.

Those systemic changes will likely include the belated adoption by the U.S. Catholic bishops of a national policy in the handling of pedophilia cases — a policy that the bishops declined to put in place some 15 years ago. The larger context for that failure is provided in Jason Berry's powerful indictment, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children* (Doubleday, 1992; Image paperback edition, 1994).

Sadly, the bishops have paid an extremely high price for that failure, and so has the church for which they are pastorally responsible — in terms of out-of-court financial settlements in the hundreds of millions of dollars; in the demoralization of clergy and laity alike; in the further decline of vocations to the



essays in theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

priesthood on the part of healthy, heterosexual young men and in the tarnishing of the Catholic priesthood's heretofore excellent reputation in society and especially within the church.

Another systemic change will involve significant improvements in the methods of recruiting candidates for the priesthood, educating and spiritually forming them in the seminary and then certifying them for ordination. What is already the case in some seminaries will have to become a national practice — namely, the direct involvement of lay people as well as priests, women as well as men, in the process of evaluating and approving candidates for ordination.

Beyond this, there is little else that the bishops of any country can do without explicit authorization from the Vatican.

The bishops cannot admit to the seminary married men or young men who wish eventually to marry. Only the pope can abrogate the law of obligatory celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church, and this pope has made it abundantly clear that he is not open to such a change.

It is even more emphatically the case with the ordination of women. Under John Paul II neither of these options is within the realm of possibility. Indeed, he has instructed the bishops not even to permit, much less encourage, a discussion of such proposals. Any priest who reveals any degree of openness on these issues is disqualified from consideration for appointment to the hierarchy.

And that raises yet another systemic problem that cannot be resolved at local levels, but requires a decision at the highest executive level of the church. It concerns the process by which priests are identified and then approved as candidates for ordination as bishops.

One of the greatest "mysteries" for many Catholics, and not a few priests as well, is how bishops are made. Why are certain types of priests favored, while other types are simply excluded from consideration?

Everyone knows that the pope is the ultimate authority, but they also know

that there are more involved in the process than just him. The names are surfaced through secret channels — some formal, many informal — and then vetted in secret meetings at regional and national levels. The short list is forwarded to the Congregation for Bishops in the Vatican where the names are discussed, again in secret. They are submitted, finally, to the pope for his approval.

The appointees are simply announced in Rome, at which time some diocese suddenly discovers that it has a new bishop. The two most common reactions are: "Who is he? Where does he come from? Does anyone know anything about him?" and "Oh, my God, not him!"

Not often enough, someone will be appointed from within the local clergy who is known and respected by his brother priests and by significant numbers of active lay persons and religious.

One example of the latter was the appointment of Howard Hubbard as bishop of Albany in 1977 when Paul VI was the pope and Archbishop Jean Jadot was Apostolic Delegate to the United States.

But that was a much different time from our own.

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

Darkness is overcome by the light of Easter

Easter Sunday (March 31): (R3) John 20:1-9; (R1) Acts 10:34, 37-43; (R2) Colossians 3:1-4.

A family was watching a movie on television about the life of Jesus. Their 6-year-old daughter was deeply moved, as the movie realistically portrayed Jesus' crucifixion and burial in a borrowed tomb. She watched as guards were placed outside the tomb. Then suddenly, she said with great anticipation, "Now comes the good part."

That's what the Easter celebration is — the good part of the last days of Jesus' pilgrimage on earth. Millions of his followers will sing, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today!"

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark. On Friday, her Master had been crucified. Mary Magdalene watched him die a horrible death. Afterward, they laid her precious Lord in a borrowed tomb. How could this be? This was the man who had come to redeem Israel. She could not understand.

Where was God in all this? Or the ten thousand angels? Was there no one to stop this awful miscarriage of justice? The light of Mary's world had been extinguished.



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

A world without Christ would be a dark world indeed. Imagine our nation without its Christian hospitals and universities, its homeless shelters. Imagine a world with no basis for moral decision making and families who never prayed together. Imagine a world without Handel's *Messiah*, a world without altars at which to marry our young and bury our old. Imagine a society with no sense of spiritual purpose and undergirding. Some would argue that we already have such a society. How sad!

While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. That darkness was spiritual as well as physical. She found the stone rolled away — and the body gone. What was going on, she wondered. Fear gripped her soul. Had his en-

emies stolen his body?

Mary rushed to find the disciples. They verified her discovery and left. As she stood outside the tomb weeping, Jesus came to her. But she did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be a gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where so I can take him." Jesus spoke her name, "Mary!" Mary cried out in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). She clung to him. Jesus told her to go tell the disciples, "I am going to my Father and your Father." Mary Magdalene did as she was told. She announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

Mary Magdalene had come to the tomb while it was still dark. But the darkness was soon overcome with light. Maybe that is the message so many need to hear this day. Perhaps, for whatever reason, some are in darkness right now. Family concerns. Problems at work. Anxiety about health or the future. The loss of someone loved. Easter promises us more than the stars in our darkness. Easter promises us that in the midst of our deepest darkness the Son rises to overwhelm the darkness forever.

Victor Hugo once wrote, "The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes on twilight; it opens on the dawn." Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark; but the darkness did not remain. The risen Son brought dawn.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, April 1
Acts 2:14, 22-33; Psalms 16:1-2A, 5, 7-11; Matthew 28:8-15

Tuesday, April 2
Acts 2:36-41; Psalms 33:4-5, 18-20, 22; John 20:11-18

Wednesday, April 3
Acts 3:1-10; Psalms 105:1-4, 6-9; Luke 24:13-35

Thursday, April 4
Acts 3:11-26; Psalms 8:2A, 5-9; Luke 24:35-48

Friday, April 5
Acts 4:1-12; Psalms 118:1-2, 4, 22-27A; John 21:1-14

Saturday, April 6
Acts 4:13-21; Psalms 118:1, 14-15, 16AB-21; Mark 16:9-15

In Loving Memory

MARRION MONUMENTS

476 STATE ST.
Quality Since 1895
Large indoor display
Open M/F 10-5, Sat. 10-2
(595) 546-4450

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" RM 10:13

Mr. Dominic's

Smoke-free, dining room
(off street parking available)

Delicious appetizers, soups, veal dishes, vegetarian, chicken, fish, and homemade pasta

10% SENIOR DISCOUNT WITH THIS AD!

Lunch: Tues.-Fri. 11-2
Dinners Daily from 4:30-9 p.m.

CLOSED EASTER SUNDAY

4699 Lake Ave
(585) 865-4630
www.mrdominics.com

Your Money Deserves the Best!
Gen-See Makes The Difference

Earn More Worry Less

Since 1975...

- Regular monthly checks
- Term 3, 4, or 5 years
- No fees
- Rate of interest guaranteed for term of certificate

GEN-SEE CAPITAL CORPORATION
CALL NOW... 1-800-507-4393

MAKE ROSARIES

Call for our catalog and special introductory offer

LEWIS & COMPANY
P.O. Box 268-K Troy, NY 12181
518-235-1700
www.rosaryparts.com

Logan's

FROM 50 TO 1000 PEOPLE SINCE 1955

FOR PRIVATE PARTIES
3 DISTINCTIVE DINING ROOMS
SPACIOUS PRIVATE • COCKTAIL LOUNGES

Banquets • Weddings
Retirement Parties • Dinner Dances
Sales Promotion Dinners • Clam Bakes • Buffets

R&R O'Connor's
1420 Scottsville Rd. • Rochester
Phone: (585) 235 6978