

# COLUMNISTS

## Spokesmen disagree on pedophilia issue

There are many adverse effects of the current pedophilia crisis: the demoralization of clergy and laity; the damage done to the reputation of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy; the high costs of out-of-court settlements and their impact on the funding of the church's social and educational ministries; the further decline in vocations to the priesthood; and, most serious of all, the grave, long-term harm done to its innocent victims and their families.

In recent weeks a new item seems to have been added to the list: increased expressions of antipathy toward gay priests, of whom there are surely thousands in the United States alone. What is remarkable — but not surprising — is that these criticisms are coming from both sides of the ecclesiastical spectrum: from progressives who view the inordinately high percentage of gays in the priesthood as lessening the pressure for a change in the law of obligatory celibacy, and from homophobes who look upon gays as disreputable souls held in the grip of the worst sort of moral perversion.

Even though prominent psychiatrists and psychologists have been reminding us that there is no necessary link between homosexuality and pedophilia, the view to the contrary still holds sway in many parts of the church and society. In such



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

precincts, the solution is easy: Get rid of gay priests and we'll be rid of this horrible problem of sexual abuse of children.

Surprisingly, the starkest expression of this view emanates from one of the highest sources in the Vatican administration: Dr. Joaquin Navarro-Valls, a psychiatrist and the pope's official media liaison.

He has questioned whether homosexuals can validly be ordained, comparing the situation of a gay priest who may not realize that he is gay to that of a gay man who marries while unaware of his sexual orientation. Dr. Navarro-Valls pointed out that, just as such a marriage can be annulled on the grounds that it was invalid from the start, so, too, the ordination of a gay man might be declared invalid.

A few priests have privately observed that, if this were actually to happen, the

Roman Catholic Church might lose two-thirds of its priests under the age of 45 and some bishops as well. At the same time, many of its seminaries could be emptied of all but a handful of students.

The most incisive comment on Navarro-Valls' remark came from Eugene Kennedy, noted psychologist and author of *The Unhealed Wound: The Church and Human Sexuality* (St. Martin's Press, 2001), now available in a paperback edition. His central criticism, in a recent column for Religion News Service, bears repeating:

"These are unjustified and inexcusable statements whose real intent is obvious. ... If the Vatican concludes that homosexual ordination is invalid, then it can boast that no valid priest has ever been guilty of pedophilia.

"[It] used the same technique when it began to compile statistics on heterosexuals applying for permission to marry, telling them that if they admitted that they never wanted to be priests, or had severe psychological problems, their permissions would be granted quickly. Officials could then claim that no real priests ever sought marriage, only those who were either disturbed or had never had vocations.

"Dr. Navarro-Valls is close to malpractice in floating this trial balloon ... [which]

is breathtaking in the depth of its insult to the many wonderful homosexual priests who serve with such integrity, to all homosexuals, and, indeed, to heterosexuals whose good common sense rejects such theorizing."

Dr. Navarro-Valls may have some competition in the category of most wide-of-the-mark statements on this tragic crisis: Father Richard Neuhaus, a former Lutheran minister who managed almost immediately upon joining the Catholic Church to insert himself into its centers of power.

For him the explanation is simple: the liberals did it. According to him, the counterculture had made significant inroads in the 1960s and '70s, and seminarians were encouraged by faculty to believe that celibacy was about to go the way of the buggy whip — and to behave accordingly.

Father Thomas Doyle, a canon lawyer who worked closely with the bishops in the 1980s and urged them — unsuccessfully — to adopt a national policy on pedophilia, characterized this view as "nonsense." Pedophilia, he said, is a deeply ingrained disorder having nothing to do with ideology.

Perhaps the papal insiders, Dr. Navarro-Valls and Father Neuhaus, need to talk.

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

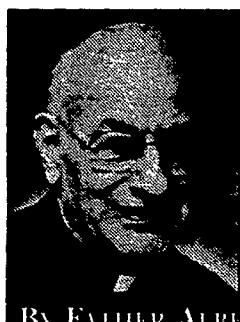
## Thomas was more than the doubting apostle

2nd Sunday of Easter (April 7): (R3) John 20:19-31; (R1) Acts 2:42-47; (R2) 1 Peter 1:3-9.

Sunday's Gospel is about the apostle Thomas. We don't know a lot about Thomas. He was one of the original Twelve, who, according to John's Gospel, was also known as Didymus. And we know he was not a coward.

That little tidbit of information comes earlier in John's Gospel in the story of the raising of Lazarus. When word came to Jesus that Lazarus was quite sick, a dilemma presented itself. Lazarus' home was in Bethany, which was in Judea. The religious authorities in Judea were already threatening Jesus' life. It was risky for Jesus and the Twelve to travel back there. Jesus, however, was determined to make the journey. It was Thomas who spoke up and said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:9) Thomas certainly was not halfhearted in his commitment to Christ. And certainly he was no coward.

Perhaps it was Thomas' brutal honesty that has tarnished his reputation. At the Last Supper, Jesus was speaking some of the most beautiful words ever recorded. "Do not let your hearts be troubled," he said. "You have faith in God; have faith in



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? Where I am going, you know the way."

Thomas said, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Thomas was not uncommitted. He was simply intellectually honest.

When the other disciples told Thomas they had seen the risen Lord, he blurted out, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Thomas was not being difficult. He was a cautious man, a man of integrity, a man who did not plunge in without all the facts. When he did plunge in, he gave his all, as when the

risen Christ did appear to him. Before such incontrovertible evidence, Thomas knelt, declaring, "My Lord and my God!"

Most of us came to the faith because our parents brought us to it. But sooner or later we must confirm our faith. Then our faith will reassure us in time of crisis, it will motivate us to be all we are capable of becoming and move us to live the faith so that others may come to it.

We do not know much about Thomas' life after the incident with Jesus. One story tells us that when King Gundaphorus of India sought a carpenter to build him a palace, it was Thomas who was hired. Thomas was given money to buy materials and to hire workmen, but he gave the money to the poor. When the king sent for Thomas and demanded, "Hast thou built me the palace?" Thomas answered, "Yes. Thou canst not see it now, but when thou departest this life, then thou shalt see it." The king was angry and Thomas was in danger of his life; but in the end the king was won for Christ and Thomas brought the faith to India.

There is something very lovable and admirable about Thomas. Faith was never easy, obedience never came readily. But once he was sure, and once he had counted the cost, Thomas went to the

limit of faith and of obedience.

Faith in Christ is the most important choice we will ever make. Once made, the rest of life falls into place. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

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

### Daily Readings

**Monday, April 8**  
Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10; Psalms 40:7-11; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

**Tuesday, April 9**  
Acts 4:32-37; Psalms 93:1-2, 5; John 3:7B-15

**Wednesday, April 10**  
Acts 5:17-26; Psalms 94:2-9; John 3:16-21

**Thursday, April 11**  
Acts 5:27-33; Psalms 34:2, 9, 17-20; John 3:31-36

**Friday, April 12**  
Acts 5:34-42; Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14; John 6:1-15

**Saturday, April 13**  
Acts 6:1-7; Psalms 33:1-2, 4, 5, 18-19; John 6:16-21

  
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**Kids' Answers from page 12:**

1. priest, 2. rosary, 3. Advent, 4. Yahweh,
5. Easter, 6. ritual

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