

COLUMNISTS

Fr. Hesburgh, a remarkable leader, turns 85

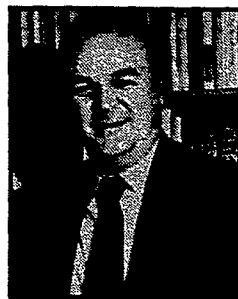
Can you imagine someone spending a good part of his 85th birthday flying more than halfway across the country to receive his 150th honorary degree the next day? The only individual who could possibly fit that description ranks at the top of any list of Catholic leaders in higher education and in the history of the church in the United States.

Holy Cross Father Theodore M. Hesburgh turned 85 on May 25th. Three years older than Pope John Paul II, he has been blessed with better health and greater vigor than the Holy Father. Were one octogenarian to step aside in favor of another, the change would be far more dramatic than most people would normally have assumed.

Since Father Ted, as he prefers to be called, retired as president of the University of Notre Dame in 1987, he has maintained a pace and a range of high-level responsibilities that would have left far younger individuals gasping for air.

One of his most remarkable post-retirement achievements was his election to the Board of Overseers at Harvard University — the first priest so honored — and then, in 1994, at age 77, as chair of the board for two terms.

Having studied in Boston as a seminarian in the late 1950s, I can still recall



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

the spirit of animosity that existed between the local Catholic community and what some in it referred to as "that godless place across the [Charles] river."

If anyone had suggested 45 years ago that a Catholic priest would some day be chairman of Harvard's Board of Overseers, they would have been greeted with the most disdainful laughter. But Father Ted Hesburgh achieved that distinction without even applying for the job.

They came after him with everything they had, because they had seen in him what everyone else who has ever known Theodore Hesburgh has recognized. He is one of the greatest natural leaders of our time — not only in higher education, but measured against leaders in politics, business or the professions as well.

Leaders are people with vision, and

they have the capacity of enlisting others to share in their vision and to work in concert toward its realization.

To use an overworked expression, leaders think out of the box. Not bound to conventional wisdom, they are least comfortable on heavily trodden paths. They build on tradition, but are not constrained by it.

They imagine new and better ways of doing things. They anticipate problems and trends, and so are proactive rather than reactive. In the end, they are people filled with confidence and hope.

In Father Hesburgh's case, his confidence and hope are rooted in his faith. His daily prayer is "Come, Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the divine principle of healing and reconciliation, of renewal and reform, of love, justice and peace.

True leaders face crises squarely; they do not flee from them, nor do they seek scapegoats to explain them away. They are doers, not followers.

Others recognize true leadership when they see it. Father Hesburgh has received 150 honorary degrees from universities and colleges of every type. He has received numerous national awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal, 15 presidential appointments, including

chairmanship of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and various papal assignments, including the Vatican's representative to the Atomic Energy Agency.

Father Hesburgh regards his greatest achievements as president of Notre Dame to have been the transfer of control of the university from his own Congregation of Holy Cross to a lay board of trustees in 1967 and the admission of women to the university in 1972.

He also insured the academic vitality of Catholic higher education by bringing together leading Catholic educators in 1967 to craft the celebrated Land O'Lakes statement that applied the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy to all Catholic universities and colleges. His leadership was also exercised globally, particularly in his role as chair of the International Federation of Catholic Universities for seven years.

I recommended in a column 25 years ago that Father Hesburgh should be appointed cardinal-archbishop of New York and then become president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

We could not have done any better — then or now.

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

Homosexuality is not the norm in priesthood

11th Sunday of the Year (June 16): (R3) Matthew 9:36-10:8; (R1) Exodus 19:2-6; (R2) Romans 5:6-11.

This month I've already touched upon what a priest is and on the what and the why of celibacy. I would like to devote a few thoughts to homosexuality, pedophilia and the priesthood.

First of all, allegations of sexual abuse by a very few priests should never be used to tarnish the entire priesthood.

In the early 1990s, the Archdiocese of Chicago undertook a bold and thorough self-study on sexual abuse by priests, examining every priest who had served the archdiocese over the previous 40 years — some 2,200 individuals. The survey found that about 40 priests, 1.8 percent, were guilty of misconduct with minors in some point of their careers. No evidence existed against the overwhelming majority, about 98 percent of parish clergy.

The study also found that just one of the 2,200 priests was a pedophile, a person who seeks sex with children below the age of puberty. The majority of misconduct cases were with persons 16 years old or older. Of course, these acts are immoral, sinful and unjustifiable.

Besides this terrible aberration, there is homosexuality. In Greek "homo"



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

means "same." Homosexuality means "relations between those of the same sex" — man having relations with man, and woman with woman (lesbianism).

According to the best authorities, homosexuality is acquired. Homosexuals are made, not born. Pederasty or ephebophilia (a man having sexual relations with an adolescent boy) was not ingrained in the Greek character in Homer's time (c. 1000 BC). It developed after 500 BC. The Greeks traced the cause to nudity in gymnastic training, typical of Greek education at that time.

All these types of sexual relations are immoral and gravely sinful. Very likely Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of sodomy or homosexuality (Gen 19:4). "You shall not lie with a male

as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination" (Lev 18:22). The penalty for such practice was death (Lev 20:13). In the New Testament Paul cites homosexual practices as part of the moral rot of the pagan world (Rom 1:26-27).

Today we see an effort to legalize homosexuality, to give it a status of normality. Even in ancient Greece, when homosexuality was rampant, it was regarded as abnormal. Plato banished it from his ideal state and regarded legalizing it as the act of a madman.

The church condemns homosexuality, but not the homosexual, for the homosexual is a person, a child of God, worthy of every consideration. Jesus always looked beyond the acts of the sinner and won a saint (Luke 7:36 ff). The church does the same; she realizes that the hearts of homosexuals are capable of love and so of redemption.

The church advises priests to treat them "with understanding and sustain them in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulty and their inability to fit into society" (*Humana Persona*, No. 8).

By a strong resolve, by psychological help and, above all, by prayer, the homosexual can be led to normal sexuality. It was done in Greece, through Paul's

preaching (Col. 3:5). The Lord himself said to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

For more information, visit www.couragerc.net.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, June 17

1 Kings 21:1-16; Psalms 5:2-3, 5-7; Matthew 5:38-42

Tuesday, June 18

1 Kings 21:17-29; Psalms 51:3-6, 11-16; Matthew 5:43-48

Wednesday, June 19

2 Kings 2:1, 6-14; Psalms 31:20-21, 24; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Thursday, June 20

Sirach 48:1-14; Psalms 97:1-7; Matthew 6:7-15

Friday, June 21

2 Kings 11:1-4, 9-18, 20; Psalms 132:11-14, 17-18; Matthew 6:19-23

Saturday, June 22

2 Chronicles 24:17-25; Psalms 89:4-5, 29-34; Matthew 6:24-34

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