

# COLUMNISTS

## Crisis can be occasion for reform and growth

The current sex-abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is usually referred to as a crisis. What does that mean?

The word "crisis" belongs to a larger family of words, including critic, critical, criticism and criterion, derived from the Greek verb *krinein*, meaning "to separate" or "to decide." Accordingly, a critic is one who, like the Lord in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25), separates the worthy from the unworthy.

In doing so, the person exercises a critical function and manifests critical skills, that is, the ability to discern real quality in the midst of mediocrity or sham. Such criticism is based on criteria. A criterion is a standard of judgment used to discern and separate the good from the bad.

A crisis is literally a turning point, a moment or stage in which a process can go in two or more directions. It is a time of separating out, of deciding, of making a choice (*krinein*). To be in a state of crisis — political, medical or religious — is to be at the threshold of decisive change, usually, but not always, attended by considerable risk and suspense.

Psychologists have long reminded us that there can be no growth without crises. We constantly find ourselves in situations where we are forced to decide whether to move in one direction or an-



BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

### essays in theology

other. And not choosing is itself a choice. A crisis, therefore, presents new opportunities for growth, but also new temptations to repress and regress.

The current scandal is such a crisis. The church can see it as both a challenge and an opportunity for growth, or it can attempt to wait out the storm and hope that things will somehow return to normal once the media's attention has been diverted to other, spicier stories.

Crisis has been an integral part of the life of the church almost from the very beginning. When non-Jews, that is, Gentiles, responded positively to the preaching of the Gospel, the leaders of the early church were surprised and perplexed.

Were the new Gentile converts to be circumcised and required to observe the Jewish dietary laws and other religious

prescriptions? In other words, did every Gentile who wished to become a follower of Christ need first to become a Jew?

One group called the Judaizers, or the circumcision party, said, "Yes." But the Apostles took a different approach.

Peter baptized the centurion Cornelius and his whole household without imposing circumcision and Jewish dietary laws upon them. When word reached the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, they were furious, demanding that action be taken against Peter and anyone else who followed his pastoral example.

The dispute grew so bitterly divisive that James, the head of the Jerusalem community, decided to call the community together to settle the matter. This was done at the so-called Council of Jerusalem, which is described in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

This was the first major crisis faced by the young church. Would it take the path favored by the Judaizers, thereby insuring that the church would be little more than a renewal movement within Judaism itself, or would it take the path favored by the Apostles and their missionary associates, making it possible for the church to become a truly universal movement, open to non-Jews and Jews alike? The church chose the latter path.

The Catholic Church is at a similar turning point today. Shall it look upon the current crisis as a challenge and an opportunity finally to implement the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially with regard to meaningful lay participation in the internal governance of the church, or shall it choose to wait out the storm and then resume the course it had been following beforehand?

History reveals that the church has often emerged from a crisis spiritually stronger and healthier than before. The Protestant Reformation provoked the church, however belatedly, into its own process of reform, known first as the Counter-Reformation and then, more broadly, as the Catholic Reformation.

The process generated a new wave of spirituality that produced, in turn, a cluster of major saints, such as Philip Neri, Charles Borromeo, Francis de Sales and Teresa of Avila; new religious orders, such as the Jesuits; and the reformist Council of Trent, which, among other things, established a seminary system for the education and formation of priests.

Might we hope for a Catholic Reformation of the 21st century?

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

## Laity benefits from priests' prayer life

12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 23): (R3) Matthew 10:26-33; (R1) Jeremiah 20:10-13; (R2) Romans 5:12-15.

One of the great offices of a priest is to pray.

St. Luke, "the Evangelist of Prayer," alone records the two Gospel parables on prayer (11:5-13, 18:1-5). He alone zeros in on the prayer life of Jesus. He alone mentions that Jesus was praying when the Spirit came upon him at his baptism (3:21). He alone observes Jesus prayed all night before choosing the Twelve (6:12-13). Luke alone mentions that Peter's great profession of faith at Caesarea-Philippi was prefaced by the prayer of Jesus (9:18).

However, it is only John who tells how a priest should pray. On the last night of his life, Jesus prayed for his own (17:1-26). He was teaching priests that they, too, must pray for their flock.

The laity have an awesome mission. The proper sphere of their mission is the world. The laity are the bridge between the church and the world. Pope John Paul II said it is good that the laity are entering the ministries of the church. The only trouble is that they're heading into the sanctuary when they should be heading into the world.



BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

### a word for Sunday

The world is often hostile and anti-Christian. So the laity need help from the priests. Priests are to sanctify and sustain the laity by their prayers so that the laity in turn might sanctify the world.

A priest is not so much one who brings God to his people, as one who brings his people to God, especially by his prayers.

A priest's public and official prayers, as in the Liturgy of the Hours and the general intercessions in the Mass, are powerful because they are the prayers of the church, and God always hears his church.

Priests also need to have personal devotions. What a blessing a priest sheds on his people by his daily rosary and eucharistic adoration!

Each priest should follow a four-point plan for his spiritual life:

1. He ought to celebrate a joyful, faith-filled Mass with his people each day.

2. He must be faithful to praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily and the rosary.

3. He ought to visit the Blessed Sacrament daily.

4. He must go to confession at least once a month.

In the new Code of Canon Law, the church decrees that "in leading their lives, clerics are especially bound to pursue holiness. They are to be conscientious in devoting time regularly to mental prayer, in approaching the sacrament of penance frequently, and in cultivating spiritual devotion to the Virgin Mother of God ..." (Canon 276).

A priest is truly a priest when he is a man for others. His pastoral care must reach out to children, adults, the aged; to youth, married couples, families and the alone; to the sick, suffering and dying; to those practicing the faith and to those indifferent to or opposed to the faith.

Prayer is a proof of the priest's love for God and for all.

For years now I have prayed daily: "Mother Mary, teach me to pray, to meditate, to contemplate; to read the Scriptures and the Fathers intelligently, perseveringly and lovingly; that I may

know Christ more intimately and more personally; that, knowing him, I may love him; and, loving him, I may serve him all the days of my life. Amen."

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

### Daily Readings

Monday, June 24

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalms 139:1-3, 13-15; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80

Tuesday, June 25

2 Kings 19:9B-11, 14-21, 31-35A, 36; Psalms 48:2-4, 10-11; Matthew 7:6, 12-14

Wednesday, June 26

2 Kings 22:8-13, 23:1-3; Psalms 119:33-37, 40; Matthew 7:15-20

Thursday, June 27

2 Kings 24:8-17; Psalms 79:1-5, 8-9; Matthew 7:21-29

Friday, June 28

2 Kings 25:1-12; Psalms 137:1-6; Matthew 8:1-4

Saturday, June 29

Acts 12:1-11; Psalms 34:2-9; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19

## 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  
ON REGULAR PRICED  
DINNERS WITH THIS AD!



Lunch: Tues.-Fri. 11-2  
Dinners Daily  
from 4:00-9 p.m.

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

## Holl's Inn

"An Old-Fashioned Summer Family Resort"  
Since 1935 • 68th Season

- The Family Resort on Fourth Lake
- Open June 30 thru Labor Day
- Swimming, Boating on premises
- Golfing nearby
- Rates from \$85-\$160 per day/per person (includes 3 meals daily)
- Weekly and Family Rates, as well
- All rooms with private baths
- New! Housekeeping Cottages

Located in the Central Adirondacks  
(65 miles north of exit 31, Utica, NY)  
Preseason: 315-733-2748  
Summer: 315-357-2941  
S. Shore Rd. • PO Box 417 • Inlet, NY 13360  
www.hollsin.com



Looking for Quality  
Printing?

Call us for...  
**Laminating**

Through a special arrangement between  
Wayuga Press and the Catholic Courier  
Graphic's Department, you can now get  
quality, affordable typesetting and printing.

Give us a call for your next job!  
COURIER GRAPHICS • 716-328-4340  
WAYUGA PRESS • 315-754-6229

## DON'T MISS OUT Health Care Issue

July 11

Advertising Deadline June 27

An award-winning issue presenting up-to-date information on facilities and health-related services. Articles will address health care and church guidance on related moral and ethical concerns.

Call your ad Rep 529-9530  
(1-800-600-3628 outside  
the Rochester calling area)  
or fax copy of message to 585-529-9532

A  
ADOP  
Courier  
tion ad  
agency  
and ac  
529-95  
be incl  
inform  
Courier

THANI  
BLESS  
all favo  
miracle

Tr  
Yo