

COLUMNISTS

Ill-advised judgments can be counterproductive

Rembert Weakland, the recently retired Archbishop of Milwaukee, was one of the most intelligent and pastorally effective bishops in the United States. The circumstances surrounding his last days in office do not diminish the quality and effectiveness of his 25-year episcopal ministry.

One should not talk or write about the archbishop now as if he were simply a "case" to be analyzed and moralized over. He was and still is a priest of enormous dignity, talent and dedication.

That he was also shown to have serious faults does not place him in some special category, reserved to a tarnished few. Each of us already belongs in that category — without exception. It is just that most of us are less well-known than he, and so, too, are our transgressions. But we are all sinners.

While sin may be universal, the courage to acknowledge our sins and to beg forgiveness for them, especially in a public forum, is not. Stonewalling and outright lying are common temptations to which too many of us succumb. Indeed, the current sex-abuse crisis in the church would not have been so severe had the bishops been more forthcoming about what they had done or failed to do.

Their malfeasance involved the covering up of criminal behavior, the uncon-



essays in
theology

By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

scionable placing of innocent children in harm's way through the reassignment of known predatory priests and the passion for secrecy reflected in the million-dollar settlements designed primarily to keep the victims and their families quiet.

What bothered Catholics most about the Weakland matter was the nearly half-million-dollar settlement reached with the individual with whom the archbishop had had a long-since-ended relationship. The archbishop apologized and asked for forgiveness, pointing out that "in hindsight" he could understand why that financial settlement had "the appearance of hush money."

It was hush money, and one wonders how anyone involved could have encouraged the archbishop to go forward with it. Other Catholics have experienced a

different sort of disillusionment, as in the case of a relatively young Latin American cardinal who has been touted lately as a possible candidate for the papacy.

Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, was named a cardinal in February 2001, at 58 — the same age as Karol Wojtyla when he was elected pope. Many have spoken of Rodriguez as a great pastor, a vigorous human rights and social justice advocate, a friend of the poor and the powerless. He may indeed be all of these — and more.

However, the cardinal blotted his ecclesiastical copybook at a recent press conference in Rome, reminding us that the attribute of perfection belongs only to God.

Cardinal Rodriguez allowed himself to be drawn into a discussion of the current sex-abuse crisis in the United States. Instead of carefully measuring his words and deferring to the judgment of his brother bishops in the U.S., he questioned the motives of the victims.

When you mix money with justice, he charged, "it becomes unjust" — the implication being that the victims are more interested in riches than in reconciliation. He also dismissed many of the incidents of abuse as having occurred long ago, referring to them as "skeletons" in the "closet" — as if the books should now

be closed and the church allowed to move on. (No apparent awareness, however, of the lifelong harm to the victims!)

Cardinal Rodriguez used almost the same words that Bishop Thomas Daily of Brooklyn had uttered in the early stages of the crisis. "It would be a tragedy," the cardinal declared, "to reduce the role of a pastor to that of a cop. We are totally different, and I'd be prepared to go to jail rather than harm one of my priests."

To his credit, Bishop Daily came to regret and retract those words, and assured his full cooperation with civil authorities.

Unfortunately, Cardinal Rodriguez made even more inflammatory remarks in an interview published in the Italian monthly, *30 Giorni (Thirty Days)*. He compared the U.S. media coverage of the sex-abuse crisis to the actions of Stalin and Hitler, and singled out *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe* as engaged in a "persecution against the church."

The U.S. bishops came belatedly to see how counterproductive such a posture can be, especially in the eyes of the Catholic community itself. Papal aspirants need to learn that lesson as well.

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

Include Christ among priorities for a balanced life

14th Sunday of the Year (July 7): (R3) Matthew 11:25-30; (R1) Zechariah 9:9-10; (R2) Romans 8:9, 11-13.

Perhaps some of the most encouraging words for our troubled times can be found in Sunday's Gospel. They are "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you ... and you will find rest for yourselves."

"I will give you rest." Jesus did not mean for us to be frantically on the go all the time — even when serving him.

In World War I, fighter planes had only an off/on switch. At "contact" the engine bellowed into an immediate full-throated roar. It ran at full throttle. Pilots today know running at full throttle will quickly burn out an engine.

Likewise, human beings were never meant to operate at full throttle all the time. How often Jesus withdrew for a time apart. He spent much time with his friends. He took time to enjoy the beauties of nature, the laughter of little children, time not only to minister to others, but to allow others to minister to him in various ways. His was a life of balance.

Dr. Ken Blanchard tells how employees of Sea World trained and worked with Shamu, their killer whale. They di-



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

vided Shamu's days into five different time periods: work time, play time, free time, rest time and learning time. He wondered how many people are wise enough to try to cover the same priorities every day. And we add prayer time.

Jesus is saying to us that we need balance in our lives. Remember, he had a specific, narrowly defined ministry. He didn't try to do everything. He said he was called to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," the Jewish people. Of course, he is the savior of the world, but his time and energy, while on earth, were poured out primarily to the Jewish people.

While Jesus was on earth, the Roman Empire boasted 57,000 miles of roads. Jesus could have traveled the Mediterranean world, as Paul later did — Turkey,

Greece, Italy and Spain. People in all those places desperately needed him. But Jesus stayed within one tiny chunk of the world. Even though he had a world to save, he established priorities for his life and work. So should we!

What things are really important in my life? Am I devoting a major portion of my time on these?

We will find balance in our lives if we establish priorities. The secret of finding balance and establishing the right priorities is to yoke ourselves to Christ.

In our Lord's time oxen were linked together by means of a wooden yoke across their necks. By pulling together they were able to pull far greater loads.

Jesus' point seems obvious: If we are yoked to him, our burden will be lighter, and we will be able to accomplish more. It is a simple principle, but it is amazing how few of us apply it to our lives. The choice is ours: to be yoked to Christ or not. Without him we can do nothing. With him there is nothing that we cannot do.

Being yoked to Jesus doesn't mean so much that we take on his burdens, but that he, pulling alongside us, takes on our burdens. Yes, it's tough being a disciple. Yet the disciple is yoked to Jesus.

And in that relationship, with Jesus taking on most of the load, we find the yoke is easy and the burden light.

So the choice is ours: We can have balance in our lives, if we have the right priority, which is to be yoked to Christ.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, July 8

Hosea 2:16, 17B-18, 21-22; Psalms 145:2-9; Matthew 9:18-26

Tuesday, July 9

Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Psalms 115:3-10; Matthew 9:32-38

Wednesday, July 10

Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Psalms 105:2-7; Matthew 10:1-7

Thursday, July 11

Hosea 11:1-4, 8C-9; Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16; Matthew 10:7-15

Friday, July 12

Hosea 14:2-10; Psalms 51:3-4, 8-9, 12-14, 17; Matthew 10:16-23

Saturday, July 13

Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalms 93:1-2, 5; Matthew 10:24-33

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Kids' Chronicle

Answers from page 12

1. Emmanuel, 2. Bethlehem, 3. Jordan, 4. Twelve, 5. sea, 6. cross

Education:

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