

Not all martyrs canonized by church

A martyr is literally a "witness." In the early church, there was a distinction between red martyrs (who died for the faith) and white martyrs, or confessors (who suffered for the faith, but short of death).

Many of the 465 saints that John Paul II has canonized during his 24-year pontificate have been red martyrs. This pope has a special regard for such martyrs. However, even within this venerable category of heroic Christians, not everything is as it seems.

On Sunday, December 1, the Society of Jesus liturgically commemorates four such heroic martyrs: Edmund Campion, Ralph Sherwin, Alexander Briant and Robert Southwell. All were brutally tortured and put to death during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. They were brave and committed priests who could have saved themselves had they been willing to compromise their principles.

Out of historical context, their executions would seem to have been open-and-shut cases of unmitigated evil perpetrated by a tyrannical Protestant ruler. But in context, they take on a somewhat different light.

What were the circumstances in which the executions occurred? Why did Elizabeth resort to such extreme remedies for perceived disloyalty to the crown? Could these martyrdoms have been avoided if there had been a different sort of behavior on the



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

Catholic side as well?

During the prior reign of the Catholic Queen Mary I (1553-58) some 280 Protestants were put to death. Although Elizabeth returned Protestantism to England, there was little retaliatory persecution of Catholics for the first 12 years of her reign. The change in policy came only after the papal excommunication and deposition of the queen by Pius V in 1570, and the discovery of a plot to carry out that deposition the following year.

It was eight years after that papal bull of excommunication and deposition that Campion returned to his native England to inaugurate a Jesuit mission, not so much to convert Protestants as to bring lapsed Catholics back to the church.

A brilliant orator and writer, Campion was also a man of intrigue. He crossed the English Channel from France disguised as a merchant. Not all Catholics welcomed him. Many feared his clandestine activities would only exacerbate an already delicate political situation.

He taunted the royal government, sending a famous challenge to the Privy Coun-

cil entitled, "Campion's Brag," in which he described his mission as one of rescuing his fellow countrymen and women from "foul vice and proud ignorance."

Later he published his *Decem Rationes (Ten Reasons)*, a defense of Catholicism and a challenge to Protestants to debate him. A few weeks later he was arrested for treason and eventually hanged, drawn and quartered. A similar fate befell Sherwin, Briant and Southwell.

On the day after their feast, the church unofficially commemorates a different type of martyr: Maryknoll sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan. These women were raped and murdered in 1980 by thugs under orders from El Salvador's right-wing government that despised their work among the poor and the oppressed.

Nine months earlier government agents had assassinated Archbishop Oscar Romero while he was celebrating Mass, so threatened were they by his prophetic leadership against their murderous military regime.

In a pontificate that places such a high premium on martyrdom and promotes so many to the ranks of the blessed and the saintly, one wonders why these five have been overlooked.

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

Asks about Veterans Day in schools

To the editor:

The Nov. 14 photo of children in a Catholic elementary school laughing while playing with a military helmet was of concern to me. I do not think that the third grade is too early to begin teaching children that instruments of war are objects of profound sadness.

I would like to know more about the Veterans Day celebrations not only at St. John of Rochester School in Fairport but at all of our Catholic schools. Do these programs glorify war without pointing out the bitter reality? Do they include the concepts of peace, non-violent conflict resolution, diversity and "love your enemy?"

I think that we can show respect to our veterans and at the same time work together to prevent future war. This is how we best honor these good men and women.

Kathleen McQueen
Beresford Road
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Tune may be singers' wish

To the editor:

In a recent issue Bill Kehoe wrote expressing his views on hymns sung in today's Catholic Church. In (the Nov. 21) issue he is assailed for his comment by several writers. Hang in there, Bill, as you are cor-

rect. One only has to look around the church and see that very few have the hymnal in hand and a good many are not joining in song. Age is not a factor. Compare the involvement then to when an old time hymn or so called public song, i.e. "God Bless America" is sung. The response is robust.

I recently attended over a period of time a very small Catholic Church in Roanoke, Va. The church, St. Gerard's, is on the original site of one built over 200 years ago, a log cabin, that was known as the church in the wilderness. The face of the congregation has changed many times through its 200 plus years as we were advised by the young pastor Father Tom Mattingly from Euclid, Ohio. Today's congregation is 80 percent Black, 12 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, with the balance Caucasian. All are involved in the various ceremonies. The greeting of peace takes an average of 12 minutes. They sing the old time hymns including many popular gospel songs as they are referred to and many so called public songs. Mixed in are a few of the new Hymns. The singing is inspirational. The camaraderie amongst the parishioners is contagious. I did not see anyone arrive late or leave early, with many, after the service, going to a side chapel for continuing special prayer. Would I be wrong in assuming it is not the lyrics that moves the congregation? Could it be the melody?

John Compton
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Honeoye Falls

Sees conflict in legal move

To the editor:

In your Thursday, Oct. 24, paper, there was an article regarding procedures on sexual abuse. It stated that care and healing of the victims continues to be put above all else.

Imagine my surprise

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