

Church may welcome broader range of voices



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

MORE LETTERS

which defended the rights of workers to organize to protect their interests, to Msgr. John Regan's early 20th century labor reform activities, including a call for a minimum wage act, social security, health and unemployment insurance, to our current Pope's writings and supportive relationship with Poland's labor leader Lech Walesa, the Church has tried to protect the rights and dignity of the laborer, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

While one is free to disagree with Father McBrien's conclusion, at least he has made people think. We get great deals at Wal-Mart! Every wonder why?

Tom Agness
 Reddick Lane
 Rochester

No dilution for chorister

To the editor:

At a Holy Trinity choir meeting, the director opined that our participation in Webster Council of Churches ecumenical service is predicated on the idea that our musical offering will not be demonstrably too Catholic or traditional. Bland and deconstructed is best. No Latin; too elitist. Distinctively Catholic pieces will be construed as offensive. Accordingly, only politically cleansed, new age and diluted Gospel selections are the ticket to ingratiate ourselves to the god of ecumenism. No thanks. I'm indebted to my Roman

Catholic roots, replete with a rich musical heritage representing layers of texture and history. This legacy was lovingly passed to me by good people who bore discrimination partly based on the free expression of their religious customs. I will not dishonor them now or disrespect my religion by supporting bigotry aimed at my church. I owe no allegiance to the ecumenical movement. The Council of Churches does not include all Christian denominations and their parent organization promotes the sophomoric "What would Jesus drive?" campaign. I will take my moral cues elsewhere. Unless this fog of perverseness and censorship disappears, I would feel shame to lend my efforts to any such future event.

Patricia F. Seiler
 South Estate Drive
 Webster

Lay pensions also need aid

To the editor:

In the January 16 *Catholic Courier* ("Six parishes to test capital campaign") it states that one of the financial goals of the capital campaign is the stabilization of the Priests' Pension Fund. It made me wonder why in none of the financial drives in the past 17 years the pension fund for retired lay employees of the diocese has never, to my knowledge, been "stabilized." Believe me, it really needs help!

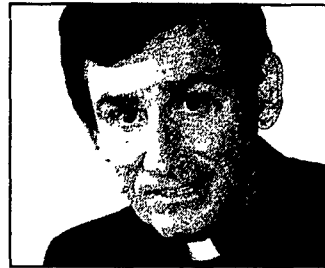
Anna Eckert
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What might we realistically expect of the church in 2003?

The scandals of last year raised the great expectation that we would see much greater empowerment of the laity in the church in the United States. And we will see continued growth in this area, with laity fulfilling larger roles in the church's power structure, but this will not be an outstanding characteristic of 2003.

Of course, studies repeatedly show that the laity already play a critical role in church decision making. Most of the church's educational systems, hospitals and charitable organizations are now under lay auspices. If we look at lay parish leaders, the national picture shows an upsurge in their numbers. Studies further confirm new and exciting modes of lay-clerical collaboration that have led to creative programs and new ways of operating. No doubt in some places this is less true than others, but on the whole we are experiencing a post-Vatican II church in which lay involvement and leadership exist as never before.

Some feel that the old boys club among priests and bishops will disappear, and that clericalism will be abolished because of the recent church blunders. But this is



Father Eugene Hemrick

Making a Difference

an unrealistic expectation as long as we maintain a closed seminary system, the old method of electing bishops and even our present manner of relating to Rome.

First, the seminaries won't change but will come under increasing pressure to screen candidates for the priesthood more carefully. Presently, a closed seminary system is seen as the best means for achieving this control.

The same can be said for electing bishops. The old system will be tightened in an effort to select better qualified bishops.

Finally, loyalty to Rome has been and always will be critical to the church's existence. Though no one likes the bureaucracy this involves, the church, like all institutions, depends on bureaucracy. The bureaucracy will undergo changes and we will perhaps see a new system one day, but it won't

happen in 2003.

I predict the biggest change in 2003 will be a church that is more attentive to and welcoming of a broader range of voices. The old authoritarian way of dismissing anyone critical of church thinking no longer will be the norm. Nor will there be a division between those "on the inside" and those "on the outside." Many more voices will be heard and will count.

The reason for this is that the church is deeply wounded. Being crippled forces us to reach out to others. Suddenly we realize a fact of life: We need others. With this realization comes new bonding and a more realistic life. People we once ignored become real to us.

How many times have once healthy and independent people, after becoming ill, recounted that the sickness awakened in them a new life? That life comes from realizing that people are more often friends than enemies, and that what matters in life are not exalted positions and achievements but friends.

In 2003, we will see a humbled church in which humility is working at its best.

Father Hemrick is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

Letters Policy

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Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions expressed.

Letters must not exceed 300 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

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