

# Who defines what is 'truly Catholic'?

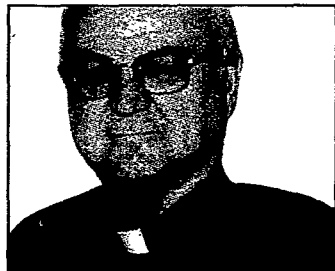
I was interviewed recently for a story in *The New York Times* on the plans of Mr. Thomas Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza and a multimillionaire Catholic layman, to build a new Catholic university outside of Naples, Florida, in a town to be newly named Ave Maria, after the university itself.

Mr. Monaghan not only hopes to create a first-rate Catholic university, but also one with a Division I football team. Some years ago, the Reverend Jerry Falwell expressed the same hopes for his Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, but, so far, no luck.

Most of my interview was devoted to Mr. Monaghan's perceived need for a new Catholic university. Unfortunately, the paper quoted me only on the relationship between Monaghan's political and religious views.

The entire quotation read as follows: "Tom Monaghan has the agenda of a right-wing Republican, and he happens to confuse that with the teachings of the Catholic Church. I wish he had spent this money the way a really good Catholic would: helping the poor, helping inner-city schools, which are being suffocated through lack of money; helping the aged and the infirm. Those are the teachings of Jesus."

My main criticism of Mr. Monaghan's initiative is that he charges, without evidence, that there are no existing Catholic universities and colleges that are "truly Catholic." In fact, he com-



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

plains, that Catholics come out of Catholic universities and colleges less Catholic than when they entered.

This begs the question: Whose definition of "Catholic"? If the answer is Pope John Paul II, then yet another question is begged: Which teachings of this pope define the meaning of Catholic?

Is "Catholic" defined by John Paul II's teachings against capital punishment? Many Catholic conservatives openly disagree with the pope on that issue.

Is "Catholic" defined by John Paul II's denunciation of a preventive war against Iraq? Many Catholic conservatives disagree with the pope on that.

Is "Catholic" defined by the current pope's teaching that we must have a "preferential option for the poor" in the allocation of resources? Many Catholic conservatives regard that as Marxist nonsense at worst and naive at best.

Is "Catholic" defined by the present pope's teaching that workers have a natural right to organize into labor unions? Many Catholic con-

servatives are anti-union.

Will Ave Maria University have a required course on Catholic social teachings, and will it be taught by someone other than a Catholic conservative, like Michael Novak, for example?

Does Mr. Monaghan really think that there are no "truly Catholic" universities? What about The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.? Not conservative enough? What about the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio? If that's not conservative enough for him, then he must live on another planet.

If Mr. Monaghan really wants to advance the cause of Catholic education, as a businessman he must know that you have to develop your customer base early in life.

Why, then, doesn't Mr. Monaghan concentrate on Catholic elementary and high schools, especially in the inner city where they are so strapped for money?

But parochial schools don't have Division I football teams. Is that what this is all about? Beating Notre Dame some day?

If so, Mr. Monaghan should give Jerry Falwell a call. Oh, they might disagree on a few doctrines, but they're likely to be reading from the same page when it comes to Catholic social teaching.

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

## Pastor offers background on proposal

To the editor:

I wish to share with your readers some of the background on the proposed expansion of the facilities here at St. Joseph's in Penfield. The letter to the editor from the Ellison family (Feb. 27, "Save funds to aid area's unemployed") raised concerns about the project, but did not offer any of the reasons for our decision to propose this plan to our parishioners.

After almost three years of study, our Pastoral Council published a Pastoral Plan last April calling for us to examine ways to grow our ministries and provide more support for many of the ministries our parish provides. To begin to do what the plan calls for would mean considering expanding our facilities. That is what an Implementation Committee after another eight months of study proposed. This is what we are considering now.

Some reasons: Our parish continues to grow with new members and people involved. Our facilities do not provide us with enough space or the kind of space we need today. For instance the largest meeting room available seats 50. Our sacramental programs involve 125-160 parents. Our school was built in 1955 and there are safety issues with traffic flow and security issues in the building. Our maintenance staff works out of the boiler room when a dedicated space would

make work easier.

Thus we propose building a new Ministry Center giving us a room that can seat 400 or be subdivided into five smaller rooms. We would place the school office at a new entrance to the school. A lunchroom would be a multipurpose room allowing children to eat in a place other than their classrooms and also be used for after-school use. Our new driveway surrounding the whole complex will allow emergency vehicles to reach all areas of the complex in case of an emergency. The maintenance room would provide a space for repairs and storing of equipment.

In a parish of our size and diversity not everyone is going to agree with decisions or directions that are made. It is my hope that with further sharing of information, parishioners will see the quality of service issues that this project raises.

Father Kevin P. Murphy,  
 pastor, St. Joseph Church  
 Gebhardt Road  
 Penfield

## Pray, write to leaders

To the editor:

Remember how St. Monica prayed for her wayward son? He became one of our greatest saints, Augustine. Could Hussein become an Augustine?

In a recent parish bulletin, our pastor quoted from Agnes Sanford's book *The Healing Light*, in which she wrote that: "Whenever we lovingly hold a person in our prayers it is important that we convey our love to that person so the person is aware that we are indeed praying for them." Our pastor suggested that we pray daily for George Bush and Saddam Hussein, that they find a way in their hearts to spare their nations and our world the horrors of war; and that we write a short note to each to tell them of our prayers. The God to whom we pray is the same God to whom the Muslims pray, except that they call

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