

Age colors outlook on church reform

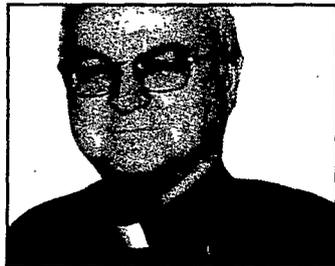
Reform-minded lay movements in the Catholic Church today seem to attract a preponderance of middle-aged and older members — those in their late 50s to their early 80s. A number of conservative critics have used this against them, charging that liberal Catholicism (however defined) is an aging and spent phenomenon.

Leaving aside the bias of ageism underlying this observation, there is a reasonable explanation why there are many more over-60 than under-40 Catholics in groups like Call to Action and Voice of the Faithful.

This older generation had reached adulthood (or near to it) when the Second Vatican Council was in session (1962-65). They had been born and nurtured in the pre-Vatican II church, enjoying its spiritual benefits but also experiencing some of its deficiencies, like clericalism, legalism in moral theology and its closed, superior attitude toward other religious traditions.

This was a church in which there was little or no meaningful role for the laity, and where examinations of conscience dwelled upon the do's and don'ts of the moral life.

The council reminded us that the church is composed of more than the hierarchy, clergy and members of religious communities. It is the whole people of God — all of the baptized and laity as well as clergy and religious. As such, everyone has a direct



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

responsibility for the mission and ministries of the church.

The council also pointed out that morality has to be rooted in both the spirit and the letter of sacred Scripture and not simply in rules and regulations formulated in later centuries under the impact of various cultural influences.

Conscience, too, plays an indispensable role in making moral judgments. It is not enough to blindly obey whatever a priest, a bishop or even a pope mandates or forbids.

As the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World insisted, Christian morality touches upon a multitude of social, political and economic issues, each affected by new scientific knowledge and "an ever-advancing technology" (n. 62). These "profound and rapid changes make it particularly urgent that no one content himself or herself with a merely individualistic morality" (n. 30).

The council also expanded our understanding of the presence and saving activity of God in the world, in-

cluding non-Catholic denominations and non-Christian religions.

Many thousands of Catholics — those in their late teens to early 40s when the council was in session and in the years immediately following when the first applications of the conciliar reforms were put in place — have an enormous personal and spiritual investment in the continued development of the Vatican II renewal.

Nothing has been more frustrating for this generation than the various forms of retrenchment that have been occurring over the past two decades and more. Bishops who were shaped by that conciliar experience have been replaced by those who were not at the council, many of whom, had they been present, would more likely have sided with the defeated minority on many issues.

Indeed, if some of the newer bishops could be transported in a time machine back to 1962 when the council opened, and carry with them their current theological and pastoral mentality, they would find themselves much more sympathetic with the curial critics of Pope John XXIII than with the great pastoral leaders who supported him.

Many younger Catholics may take Vatican II and its reforms for granted. Older Catholics remember what it took to get there.

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

Rosary could end most ills of the world

To the editor:

Why did it take seven months to print an article on the "Year of the Rosary" and the new Mysteries of Light? This announcement should have taken priority as noteworthy news. Every pastor in the diocese should have made this a Sunday homily. Our Lady in her apparitions at Fatima, time and again, requested the daily recitation of the rosary. We ignored her. The result was a decline in this most popular devotion and the chaos the world has suffered. If every Catholic prayed a daily rosary, many of our problems would be solved through the Blessed Mother not the least of which is the abomination and scourge of abortion. Satan, the father of all lies and sin, recoils from this most feared weapon: the ROSARY. I would suggest every person attending Sunday Mass be given a rosary to pray before Mass. It sure would be more fruitful and reverent than all the noise and nonsensical chatter which annoys those who are there to give PRAISE and THANKS to our LORD. The story of Fatima should be revived and taught to all the children in religious education; assuming the teachers know it.

Mary Gilardo
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Newark

EDITOR'S NOTE: We published Catholic News Service articles on the Year of the Rosary and of the Mys-

teries of Light at the time Pope John Paul II proclaimed them. In addition we have published several feature articles on the rosary since that time. The May 1 cover story was our first recent article discussing the rosary's history and evolution.

Rosary is comforting

To the editor:

The May 1 edition of the *Catholic Courier* contained letters and articles of the devotion of the rosary.

At our cluster parish — St. Anne's, Palmyra/St. Gregory's, Marion — we have a living rosary in May and also October, the month dedicated to the rosary. All are invited to participate. It's a pretty sight when all candles are lit around the inside of the church. Everyone is invited to the hall for refreshments following the rosary.

Before our Daughters of St. Anne's meetings we gather in the chapel and pray the rosary.

I have been accustomed to joining the rosary at 9:30 p.m. on station WGZL. Msgr. Joseph Cirrincione made the record of recitation of the rosary many years ago.

The rosary is inspirational and comforting.

Rena B. Camblin
Meadow Drive, Palmyra

News missed school's story

To the editor:

It was with great sadness that I read (April 10) of the closing of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School in Brockport. As an alumna, I have many fond memories. It has been a wonderful part of my life, and for 127 years, it has been an important part of this community and this diocese.

For these reasons, it was most disappointing to find that the "obituary" focused more on assigning blame — to another Catholic school, in the rival Buffalo diocese, yet! — than on the story of Nativity. The saga inter-

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