

# Evangelization, renewal should co-exist



Father Richard McBrien

## Essays in Theology

We live in a world of many false dichotomies — either/ors that should be rendered as both/ands. This is especially so in the Catholic Church where members have too often been asked to choose between spirituality and social action, communal worship and private devotions, priesthood and lay responsibility, obedience to authority and freedom of conscience, papal prerogatives and episcopal autonomy, or Catholic identity and ecumenical and interfaith outreach.

Author Peter Feuerherd writes that one of Chicago's Cardinal Francis George's "favorite themes is that the church has spent enough time focusing on itself and now must spend more time on the work of conversion. He sees evangelization as the solution to perennial problems such as the looming priest shortage" ("Chicago Catholic: A profile of Cardinal Francis George," *Commonweal*, 1/16/04).

And so another false dichotomy lands on our collective plate: Church reform or evangelization?

One should not dismiss the cardinal's legitimate concern for evangelization or his reservations about efforts to change the way the church functions as a community and as an institution.

Need we agree that we have to choose between the work of church renewal and reform and the church's essential and ongoing task of preaching the Gospel?

What the preaching of the Gospel entails is not self-ev-

other, in order to reach a full understanding of the Church's evangelizing activity."

Who is to direct this evangelization process? From which ecclesiastical ranks are they to draw co-workers? To whom are co-workers to be sent and to do what?

If we are to answer the first question with "the bishops," who selects bishops? What pastoral criteria determine their selection? Who participates in the selection? To whom are the bishops accountable? Are there limits to their authority?

How do bishops choose their immediate collaborators in the work of evangelization? What are the co-workers' qualifications? Are they to be of one gender only, and unmarried for life?

What and whose support and cooperation will the co-workers need? How are these supporters chosen? How will they relate to the co-workers and the bishop?

Each link in the chain of questions has to do with church structures, processes, rules and standards of behavior. Have we really "spent enough time focusing" on them?

The "work of conversion" does not happen in a vacuum. The false dichotomy of either evangelization or church renewal and reform has to be named as such and rejected.

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



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

## MORE LETTERS

of American deaths — combat and otherwise — in ALL our wars since 1775 is 1,223,851. If we quadruple that figure to estimate the number of deaths on the other sides of our wars, a very liberal estimate, we come to a grand total — American and enemies — of 6,119,255 since 1775.

Since *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* — January 22, 1973 — there have been more than 40 million helpless and totally innocent unborn children massacred inside the wombs God created for the protection we all received while we waited to be born!

God bless America!

John G. Lentricchia  
Bly Street  
Rochester

## Pray, learn, take action on abortion

To the editor:

I recently attended the 2004 March for Life in Washington to mourn the (ruling in) *Roe v. Wade*. When walking past the Supreme Court building, I saw the inscription on the architrave above the marble columns stating "Equal Justice Under Law." Have all had equal justice? I was overcome by thought of my accountability as a Roman Catholic. What have I done to defend defenseless babies in the womb or help women dealing with unwanted pregnancies or post-

abortion effects?

Prior to the March, we respectfully talked with Congressional Assistants — unfortunately our Representatives were absent — and discussed issues surrounding abortion, one being potential effects on the mother. A U.S. Bishops' aide recently said abortion is a reflection that we have failed to meet the needs of women. We made them aware that some aborted children may have had answers to life's most devastating diseases but never had a chance to implement them.

When we are not sensitive to the fact that human life begins at fertilization, we are not in communion with God, the creator of all life. My experience with support from the Catholic Church when dealing with a miscarriage could have been better, which makes me wonder if Catholics agree on when life begins? No wonder why abortion is so prevalent!

So what are we to do? Here are some suggestions. First of all, pray. Second of all, educate yourself. You will find that life begins sooner than you think, as God said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer 1:5). Third of all, support women who are dealing with these issues. Know that God is on the side of Pro-Life, as long as we obey His commandments as we persist in fighting for the right to life for all.

Anthony Agosta  
West Fourth Street  
Corning

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