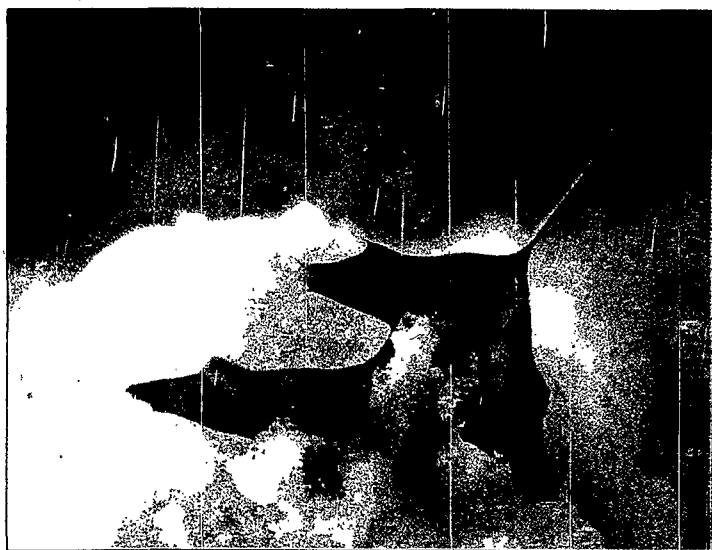


It's not 'my church, right or wrong'



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

MORE LETTERS

chased this building which they had previously been renting since 1990.

The numerous baby photos hanging on the Center's walls show the faces of infants who might not be alive today if not for this beautiful ministry. May God bless PPHC and Father Reif for this most inspiring evening.

William Reeves
Lake Avenue
Rochester

Won't renew

To the editor:

For people like me, who do not have access to the Internet or want to have it, the changing of your publication from weekly to monthly is not good at all.

The primary object of our reading are the (columnists): Father McBrien, Sister Patricia Schoelles, etc. Losing them is equivalent to losing all interest in your paper. The school sport news items appear in the secular press before yours, as well as Diocesan releases of certain importance.

What would be left for us to read? Paid advertising?

I will probably not renew my subscription when the time comes.

Enrique H. Miyares, Jr.
Chili Avenue
Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sister Patricia Schoelles, president of St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, ceased writing her "The Moral Life" column in September 2003, irrespective of the *Courier's* impending reduction in frequency. Inspired

by the 1993 diocesan General Synod, the column appeared in the *Courier* twice each month for 10 years.

Wrong way!

To the editor:

I strongly object to your plans to have *Catholic Courier* become a monthly publication. It would be a giant step — backwards!

Carl G. Truini
Oakmonte Boulevard
Webster

Respectful criticism OK

To the editor:

In a letter to the *Courier* of Feb. 5 ("More lost to abortion than in wars"), writer John G. Lentricchia of Rochester wonders if writer Brian Mulligan — whose letter in the *Courier* of Jan. 15 ("Which lives are valuable?") criticized President Bush's stance on the bombings in Iraq — also criticized President Clinton for ordering the bombing of Kosovo. It should be noted that writer Mulligan recently ran on the Democrat ticket in Mendon. Brian's letter on a similar subject to the editors was published in a recent edition of the *Democrat and Chronicle*.

It is refreshing to see that both writers though critical, exercise their freedom to do so in a respectful manner.

John Compton
Sheldon Road
Honeoye Falls

Apologetics is that part of theology which tries to show the reasonableness of the Christian faith and to refute objections against it.

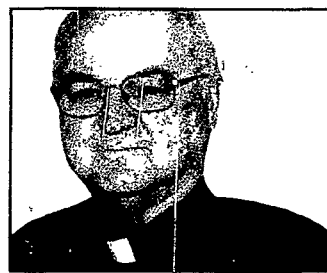
Apologetics became more explicitly Catholic at the time of the Protestant Reformation, when the Reformers questioned the use of "fallen" reason to defend and justify the faith.

Apologetics then defended the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church regarding, for example, ordained priesthood, the papacy, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacrificial nature of the Mass and the necessity of good works for salvation.

In the 19th century the new enemies of the church were perceived to be science and rationalistic philosophies. In reaction, Catholic apologetics argued for the necessity of revelation, a supernatural order and a teaching church.

Catholic apologetics in the 20th century — at least until the Second Vatican Council — sought to establish the divinity of Christ on the basis of the claims he made and the miracles he wrought — both attested to in the inspired New Testament.

Ironically, Catholic apologists were now using the Rationalists' methods, not simply defending the faith but "proving" its truth by history and logic: Jesus claimed to be divine and proved his claim by his miracles, especially the miracle of the Resurrection. These claims and



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

miracles are in the Bible, a historically reliable source. Therefore, Jesus is divine.

Next: Jesus founded a church, conferring on its leaders and their successors full authority to teach and to rule. This is attested in the Bible, a historically reliable source. Therefore, the church is a divinely established institution with full authority to teach and govern its members.

Apologetics declined in a more ecumenical age, following Vatican II, when the defense of Catholic teaching and practice was regarded as no longer necessary.

Efforts are being made to revive apologetics. Richard Gaillardetz, University of Toledo professor of Catholic Studies, in the Feb. 2 issue of *America* ("Do We Need a New(er) Apologetics?"), while acknowledging the new apologists' strengths and good intentions; identifies various weaknesses.

First, they mirror their opponents' fundamentalistic assumptions, entering into "Bible wars," citing one text against another.

Second, they view revelation as a series of abstract truths divorced from history and culture.

Third, they lump all church teachings together. For them, there is no "hierarchy of truths," as Vatican II insists.

Fourth, they tend to be excessively critical of non-Catholic expressions of the Christian faith, as if truth were all on the Catholic side and error on the other.

Fifth, they employ an ahistorical approach to key issues like the nature of the papacy, assuming, for example, that Peter was the first residential bishop of Rome.

Sixth, they stress only the church's transcendent truth and beauty, failing to acknowledge its historic failures and even sinfulness.

Finally, they tend to label as unfaithful, disloyal or even heretical those fellow Catholics who identify and criticize the human weaknesses and failures of the church, past and present.

The author draws a useful parallel between their concept of fidelity vs. disloyalty and the political order's patriotism vs. nationalism.

Patriotism combines love of country with valid criticism. Nationalism takes the position, "My country, right or wrong."

The latter is wrong politically — and ecclesiastically.

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

The *Catholic Courier* provides space for readers to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

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.

Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624 or e-mail to letters@catholiccourier.com. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification.

Letters Policy