

Resurrection has redemptive significance



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

gy entered a new period of peace and prosperity, so to speak, aided by Pope Pius XII's liberation of Catholic biblical scholarship.

One of the first and most dramatic signs came in 1950 in *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study* by, appropriately, a Redemptorist biblical scholar, Francis X. Durrwell.

Father Durrwell's book was quickly followed by many other books and articles on the subject by many other authors, and it was soon evident that there had been a veritable sea-change in the church's understanding of the heart and the scope of the mystery of our salvation.

It was as if we had been led to read for the first time, or at least with fresh eyes, the classical lines of St. Paul on the redemptive significance of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, and specifically the line, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins" (v. 17). Indeed, the Holy Spirit, the first fruits of our salvation, could not have been given to us until Jesus had been raised and glorified (John 7:39; 16:7).

Perhaps Mr. Gibson might now consider plowing back some of his record-setting profits into a second film entitled, "The Resurrection of the Christ," if only to complete the story.

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



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MORE LETTERS

thank you Jesus.

By the way, Jesus was Jewish. Why would this movie cause anti-Semitism? If anything, it should make people thank our Jewish brothers and sisters for Jesus. We all crucified Jesus.

Dan Giancursio
Crownsnest Lane
Macedon

'Ambiguous' on abortion

To the editor:

I am writing in reference to your front page lead article of Feb. 12, "Mixing religion with politics."

Your article was ambiguous on the important issue of our time, "abortion."

I believe you needed to, but did not, state upfront, for the benefit of the readers and unborn children, that ALL Democratic candidates are Pro-Choice.

It is important to be clear on this issue because your article left readers with the thought that it may be moral and in line with the Church's teachings to vote for one of the Democratic candidates, when it is neither.

Again ALL Democratic candidates are Pro-Death candidates, and I believe it is the obligation of the

Church and all who represent the Church, or appear to in any manner, to educate the people at every opportunity as to the facts, and thus help to put an end to the killing of unborn children!

I do understand that you made reference to the Web site "belief.net" that does condemn abortion in stating the Church's position, also stating the pro-choice position of John Kerry etc., but all readers of the *Courier* do not have computers and some others will not take the time to go to this Web site and/or read other non-front page articles to learn the facts.

I believe that this lead article failed at an opportunity to state the truth on the Democratic candidates and their unanimous Pro-Death positions!

Bob Zimmerman
Oakwood Road
Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Catholic News Service story in question did not even attempt to report candidates' positions on the issues, instead focusing on their apparent realization that religion is important to voters. Subsequent *Courier* articles will report the major-party candidates' positions on all relevant issues

One of the criticisms of Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ," has been that it gives only glancing attention to the Resurrection, portraying it as something that happened primarily for Jesus' own benefit, a sign of his personal victory over his Roman and Jewish persecutors.

For many decades prior to the Second Vatican Council, Catholic biblical scholarship — and the theology that depended upon it in such large measure — was not permitted by church authorities to take advantage of the most up-to-date historical and scientific methods of interpreting the sacred texts. It was not until 1943 that Pope Pius XII, in his extraordinary encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, gave Catholic biblical scholars that permission. The encyclical showed a remarkable confidence that science and faith could never be opposed to one another. The church has nothing to fear from the truth.

One of the fruits of this renewal of Catholic biblical scholarship was a newly invigorated Catholic theology, drawing now upon a richer, more accurate understanding of the meaning of biblical texts.

One of the most important insights that Catholic theologians had, especially those specializing in Christology in general and the Redemption in particular, was that the redemptive work of Jesus was not limited to his Passion and Crucifixion.

In that earlier approach,

derived largely from medieval theology, the human community was saved because of Jesus' willingness to endure unspeakable suffering, leading up to the most ignominious and painful death. In doing so, Jesus paid off the debt that we all had incurred in God's eyes because of the sin of Adam and Eve.

Jesus' preaching and good works, his acts of mercy and compassion, his courageous challenging of religious hypocrisy, were but a prelude to the Redemption.

Again, no redemptive significance in the Resurrection. It was primarily for Jesus' personal benefit: a reward for having endured such suffering and such a death.

But the Resurrection was also to have some apologetic, but not redemptive, meaning for us. Because Jesus rose from the dead, his claims to be the Son of God were valid. Only someone who was truly divine could have come back to life.

The theological tide turned dramatically against this narrow view of the Redemption as Catholic theo-

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