

Saints offer models of episcopal ministry



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lence in the neighborhood, but there is violence everywhere, even in the suburbs where some people have fled. Have you stopped to think that it might be our own fault? That we have not been good neighbors ourselves?

As I understand it, Sacred Heart aims to be a neighborhood center where all in the area are welcomed and loved. That is my biggest dream! We must not only pray about it, but we must WORK for it. With God's help it can be accomplished.

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Bankruptcies bad example

To the editor:

It is very sad when leaders of our Catholic Church will take a false stand to escape dire financial situations. Recently Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas of the Tucson, Ariz., Diocese filed bankruptcy in order to avoid liability due to sexual abuse cases that are pending against the Diocese.

A similar case took place in the State of Oregon, where the bishop of Portland through court proceedings declared the Diocese of Portland in bankruptcy.

It is the church doctrine that continuously tells us to not deceive, lie or bear false witness. It is a shame that some of our Catholic bishops who should shepherd with great pride, show us lack of responsibility and it is not a good example to other faiths. I am sure if one of us would confess to the priest that we had deliberately lied to avoid due debts by filing bankruptcy, the priest would tell us of great dishonesty and would commit sin.

The bishops of Tucson and Portland with their actions have not set an honest example by filing bankruptcy in order to avoid their penitence. If the two dioceses are actually broke without any treasury remaining, they should not be able to continue to operate! The bishops of Tucson and Portland should resign as they have faltered their church community.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For a different perspective on this issue, see the page-A9 story in which Bishop William E. Franklin discusses the possibility of a bankruptcy filing for his Diocese ofavenport, Iowa, to protect victims who have not yet come forward.

One of the many contributions of the Second Vatican Council was its insistence that saints are not to be regarded primarily as miracle workers and intercessors, but as examples or models of Christian discipleship and ministry.

The church's liturgical calendar for this week and next includes the feast days of two such exemplary saints who have been extraordinary models of episcopal ministry.

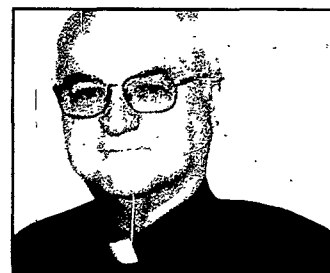
On Nov. 4 the church celebrates the feast of St. Charles Borromeo (1538-84). He has long been regarded as one of the most important bishops in the entire history of the church and one of the outstanding figures of the Catholic Reformation of the 16th century.

Born into a life of privilege and connections to power, his uncle became Pope Pius IV in 1559 and in the following year appointed his nephew (then only 22) as administrator of the diocese of Milan and a cardinal. He was also named papal secretary.

Borromeo strongly supported his uncle's decision in 1562 to reopen the Council of Trent, which had been suspended during the previous 10 years. He became an active participant in the council, drafting its catechism and contributing to various other reforms.

At age 25, he was ordained a priest, and two months later consecrated a bishop.

Borromeo embraced a simple lifestyle, giving away



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

much of his personal wealth and diocesan revenues to the poor. He also convened councils and synods, made regular visits to parishes, reorganized the diocesan administration, established seminaries, enforced standards of morality for his clergy and founded a confraternity to teach Christian doctrine to children.

In 1570 and again in 1576 he organized and took a personal role in feeding thousands of people during a famine and nursing many others during a subsequent plague. Such activities eventually wore him down. He died in Milan on Nov. 4, 1584, at age 46.

On Nov. 10 the church celebrates the feast of another great bishop, Pope Leo the Great (440-61).

Leo was well-connected in his early life, serving as adviser to two popes, Celestine I (422-32) and Sixtus III (432-40). He was elected to succeed Sixtus while still only a deacon and while away from Rome on a diplomatic mission in Gaul.

Leo was a strong advocate of papal authority, insisting

on the pope's status as Peter's heir in terms of rights and duties. But he was not interested in power for its own sake. He used his authority to root out abuses in the church, to resolve disputes, to insure unity in pastoral practices and to help clarify the church's teaching about the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.

When another bishop, Hilary of Arles, presumed to exercise authority over neighboring dioceses, Leo ordered Hilary to confine his pastoral activities to his own diocese. Bishops, Leo insisted, were to be elected by their own clergy and leading laity, and their election was to be ratified by the rest of the diocesan community, without interference even from Rome.

Leo's electoral principle is still quoted, but unfortunately the church has not observed it for centuries: "He who is in charge of all should be chosen by all."

Leo is more famously celebrated for his courageous face-to-face confrontation with Attila the Hun in 452, when Attila was devastating northern Italy and preparing to move south toward Rome. Heading a delegation from the Roman Senate, the pope persuaded Attila to spare the city.

Borromeo and Leo remain compelling models of episcopal ministry even today.

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

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