

"The Financial Scandal in the Catholic Church"

Week of September 26, 2011

ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

By Rev. Richard P. McBrien

It has been said that the next scandal to hit the Catholic Church after the sexual-abuse crisis in the priesthood would be financial.

Jason Berry has turned now from the former to the latter in his *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church* (Crown, \$25).

The two problems are, of course, connected. The Church in the United States alone has already paid out almost \$2 billion to victims of clergy abuse, just as Father Thomas Doyle, O.P., had predicted.

At least some of this amount was made larger because of the truculence of certain bishops, who stonewalled and moved predatory priests from place to place before the law and lawyers caught up with them.

Berry's book covers some old ground, for example, the activities of Father Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legionaries of Christ and a favorite of the late Pope John Paul II.

Berry and the late Gerald Renner, former Religion writer for *The Hartford Courant*, had initially exposed Maciel's behavior in copyrighted articles in *The Courant* and then in a book, *Vows of Silence: The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II* (Free Press, 2004).

But there is much more in this new book than a rehash of that subject and the various (now embarrassing) reactions to Berry's and Renner's exposé, including the protestations of such conservative Catholic luminaries as the late Father Richard John Neuhaus, founding editor of *First Things*, Harvard Law Professor Mary Ann Glendon, Pope John Paul II biographer George Weigel, William Bennett, former Secretary of Education under President Ronald Reagan, William Donahue, head of the Catholic League, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, and, of course, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, former Vatican Secretary of State and current Dean of the College of Cardinals.

Jason Berry treats the sexual-abuse scandal in Boston, where the crisis first broke out for most people with an investigative series of articles in *The Boston Globe* beginning in January 2002, the Vatican itself, and the U.S. bishops relationship with the Holy See.

There is an epilogue on Pope Benedict XVI entitled, "Benedict XVI: Pope of Ironies."

"The pope," he writes, "cannot be an authentic voice for peace, affirm the dignity of human life, and preach the values of a greener planet if people see that Vatican justice is a farce."

Berry does not consider the problems in Philadelphia because those developments came to light after the book went to print, but the scandal surrounding the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center was much earlier.

It came back in the news recently when the Knights of Columbus purchased the Center for \$22.7 million. That was a lot of money, to be sure, but it represented a \$34 million loss for the Archdiocese of Detroit.

As I wrote in my column for the week of September 5th, following the news story by Tom Roberts in the August 19th issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*, the archdiocese bore most of the original cost but also loaned the Center more than \$54 million under an arrangement worked out privately by the former Archbishop of Detroit, Cardinal Adam Maida.

Within five years of its opening, the Center was \$36 million in debt to the Archdiocese of Detroit because of the loans. The amount rose to more than \$54 million today.

Unfortunately (and this makes Jason Berry's point), Cardinal Maida made the loans without any consultation with the priests and laity of the archdiocese. It was only after the NCR reported on the debt in a February 2006 story that Cardinal Maida acknowledged the financial scope of the loans in a letter to the archdiocese.

Although there is no reference to this misuse of funds in Jason Berry's new book, I am happy to recommend *Render Unto Rome* to readers of this column. Jason Berry is a good journalist and the issue he touches upon here is too important to ignore.

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"The Rosary"
 Week of October 3, 2011
 ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY
 By Rev. Richard P. McBrien

Friday of this week, October 7th, is the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. It provides an opportunity to review the origins and purpose of one of the most popular private devotions of the 20th century, and indeed ever since the reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with rosary in hand, to St. Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858.

Pope Leo XIII, who was best known for his ground-breaking encyclical on the social order, *Rerum novarum* ("Of new realities"), in 1891, wrote no less than nine encyclicals on the Rosary to promote devotion to it. In fact, he became known in some circles as "the pope of the Rosary," an epithet that might surprise even careful readers of Catholic social thought.

The Rosary was also known at one time as the "Psalter of Mary," which gives us more than a hint of its original purpose. The 150 "Hail Marys" corresponded to the number of psalms in the Bible.

The devotion began sometime in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Illiterate Catholics could not read the psalms themselves, and so they used the beads as counters for the "Hail Marys." Some were also encouraged to meditate on a sequence of mysteries associated with the life of the Blessed Virgin.

The mysteries themselves did not become generally linked with the repetitive "Hail Marys" until the fifteenth century. Originally there were fifteen mysteries, but Catholics commonly recited only five at one time.

The mysteries of Light (or Luminous Mysteries) were added to the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries by Pope John Paul II on this feast day in 2002. They are the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the wedding at Cana, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, the Transfiguration, and the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

Contrary to the common belief among Catholics for whom the Rosary is still a popular devotion, the Carthusians had more to do with the cycle of meditations than the Dominicans. The Carthusians influenced the Dominican Alain de la Roche (not St. Dominic), who used the devotion to revive the Dominican Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Rosary gained popularity through the establishment of Rosary confraternities in the fifteenth century, which were increasingly under Dominican supervision, and in 1559 Pope Pius V, himself a Dominican, gave the Master General of the Dominican order exclusive control over these confraternities.

The feast of Our Lady of the Rosary grew out of these confraternities. However, when Christian forces won a decisive sea battle against the Turks at Lepanto, in the Gulf of Corinth, on October 7, 1571, (the first Sunday of October, when the feast was generally celebrated by devotees), the victory was attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In thanksgiving some say that the same Pope Pius V declared October 7 the feast of Our Lady of Victory (the name of my one and only parish assignment in West Haven, Connecticut). Others say that it was the first Sunday in October.

In 1573 Pius V's successor, Gregory XIII, changed the name of the feast to Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary. In 1716 the feast was extended to the whole Church in thanksgiving for yet another Christian victory over the Turks. Finally, in 1913 the date of the feast was fixed at October 7th.

There was an upsurge in devotion to the Rosary, as noted above, because of the reported Marian apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes. Pope Leo XIII's nine encyclicals also helped.

The Rosary remained a very popular devotion through most of the twentieth century, even though many more millions of Catholics could now read. Holy Cross priest, Patrick Peyton, popularized the daily recitation of the Rosary through his slogan, "The family that prays together stays together."

It also became—and still is in many places—a popular devotion at Catholic wakes, although many Catholics do everything in their power to avoid its recitation when the parish priest arrives.

Unfortunately, there have been various blatant misuses of the Rosary at weekday Masses in May and October, when it was recited aloud. More frequently, it would be recited quietly during the celebration of Mass as a substitute for the missal.

With the Second Vatican Council came a reorientation of Catholic devotional life, centered on the Eucharist itself and full congregational participation. The Mass was no longer viewed as a backdrop for private devotions.

Pope Paul VI made clear in his apostolic exhortation, *Mariialis cultus* ("On Marian devotion") in 1974 that the Rosary is not to be recited during Mass (n. 48). Many Catholics are still unaware of this teaching.

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