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A hopefully temporary hiatus for 'Essays in Theology'

Dennis Coday | Feb. 27, 2012 Essays in Theology

Theologian Fr. Richard McBrien began writing a weekly newspaper column July 8, 1966, and he has been at it ever since. As near as I can tell, McBrien's first byline in *NCR* was in 1973. We began publishing his columns weekly online in 2008, and we saw an immediate jump in our website page views.

His column began seven months after the adjournment of the Second Vatican Council, and the purpose of it, McBrien said, was "to assist Catholics to appreciate the significance of the council and to apply its teachings to the life of the church in their parishes, dioceses and nations, and indeed to the universal church itself."

On the column's 45th anniversary last summer, McBrien wrote that the column "was, and still is, for me a form of ministry to Catholics who want and deserve a more serious and critical interpretation of their faith and of its public implications."

McBrien's writings have sometimes been controversial, and in recent years the number of diocesan papers that run his "Essays in Theology" has dwindled. I have found the columns full of common sense, as he brings to current events an appreciation for church history and a theologian's insight.

I have the sad task of informing you that McBrien's last column, "Preparing for a Year of Faith," [1] will be his last for the foreseeable future. A couple of weeks back, McBrien's longtime administrative assistant at the University of Notre Dame, Donna Shearer, sent the following note: "Due to the recurrence of illness, Fr. McBrien has decided to discontinue his column for an indeterminate period of time. Thank you for your understanding at this difficult time."

I spoke with Donna and she says that McBrien is in the process of recovery -- some days are good, other days not so good. She asked us to keep him in our thoughts and prayers. I told her that I would do that and also pass that message on to readers.

Meanwhile, 45 years of columns are available online at richardmcbrien.com [2], and his most recent columns can be found at NCRonline.org/blogs/essays-in-theology [3].

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[1] http://ncronline.org/node/28461/
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