

Editorial

A Great Friend and Preacher of Peace

Father Richard McSorley, S.J., who died on Oct. 17 at Georgetown University, where he was the director of the Center for Peace Studies, once said of his good friend Lyndon LaRouche, “he evangelizes Providence.” Like any great priest, who learns to “preach what you know,” Dick McSorley recognized in LaRouche’s character, elements essential to his own.

Father McSorley’s life included many milestones. He was a religious adviser and friend of the Kennedy family, and taught former President Clinton at Georgetown University, enjoying a lifelong friendship with him. He took up the cause of civil rights in 1948, when he was assigned to a parish in rural Maryland, and was shocked to find that black and white parishioners were segregated at the communion rail. He was a leader in the movement against the Vietnam War and a Pax Christi Ambassador of Peace. He founded, and lived in, the Catholic Worker House of Hospitality in Washington, D.C., the city’s first homeless shelter.

But these things, some of which “climbers,” as he called them, would have schemed their way into, Father McSorley said he “fell into through Providence.”

He “fell into” his mission as what he called “peacemaker,” when, after a happy childhood in a Philadelphia family of 15 children, he entered a Jesuit seminary at the age of 18. After some years of study, he was sent to the Philippines to teach. There, a week after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he and other Jesuits were captured by Japanese soldiers and interned under starvation conditions in a 2,500-prisoner concentration camp, and released only when the camp was liberated in 1945.

Father McSorley had a loving, sweet soul. In an interview in *Fidelio* magazine, he told of visiting Jackie Kennedy in New York, soon after the assassination of her husband. “One evening following supper together, I visited with Jackie and the children. As it grew late

Jackie told John, ‘You get ready for bed, and maybe Father will come in to say goodnight.’ When John was ready for bed, she said softly, ‘Do you know Danny Boy? His father used to sing it to him, just before he went to sleep. He used Johnny, instead of Danny.’ I said I’d try it. John stared at me with fixed attention as I sang: ‘O Johnny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are playing. . .’

Jackie stood silently in the doorway looking at us. I was in tears as I left the room. The heavy burden of their loss pressed in on me as never before. . . . It didn’t even begin to compare to their loss, but I missed John Kennedy.”

Many refused to detect his sweetness because he was so unnervingly honest. At the June 2000 Ad Hoc Democratic Party Platform Hearings in Washington, convened by LaRouche’s Committee for a New Bretton Woods, Father McSorley, in his testimony against the death penalty, asked, “Why don’t people who preach the Scripture follow it? And the answer to that is that they want advantages the state

gives them. From the time that Christians were first let out of the catacombs, and given Roman citizenship by the Emperor Constantine . . . they want that tax exemption.”

Father McSorley carried out many public and private missions on behalf of his friend Lyndon LaRouche’s exoneration, and New Bretton Woods policy, amid all his untiring work for peace and justice. In his last weeks, when he was already informing his friends of his impending death, he dictated the following message to LaRouche: “I give you my blessing on your eightieth birthday. May you continue, with love and courage, to act on the prayers of the faithful. May you continue to teach, in your own unique way, those words of Christ, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Your friend, Dick.”

Yes, a great priest teaches what he knows.

