

# People at Mass Council Topic

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Welfare Conference's Press Department. Acting chief is William Fanning, editor of the Catholic News in New York.

In the first meeting about 30 U.S. and British newsmen were briefed on liturgical questions by a panel of experts including Msgr. Frederick McManus and Very Rev. Francis J. Connolly, G.S.R., both of the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Following is an NCWC News Service special article by Father McManus to explain the background and goals of the liturgical movement, begun officially by Pope St. Pius X early in this century and extensively advanced by Pope Pius XII.

Father McManus is one of the "periti" — experts — named by the Vatican as a special adviser on liturgical subjects for the ecumenical Council. He is professor of canon law at the Catholic University in Washington and is a former president of the National Liturgical Conference.

Rome — (NC) — Fifty years ago the renewal of Catholic worship was in its infancy. Congregational participation in the Mass already had the encouragement of Pope St. Pius X and the first halting steps in liturgical change were under way.

In 1912 no bishop, priest or layman could have imagined that in 1962 the entire body of Catholic Bishops would meet in a general council to discuss, among many other things, the thorough restoration of worship to its proper vigor and understanding in the Church. And the striking news from the Second Vatican Council is that the liturgy is first on the agenda for the consideration and decision of the bishops.

This unexpected announcement that liturgy is the first matter for study by the council has many explanations. The liturgy is in fact the public prayer life of the Church, the expression of Christian faith and piety. But the subject also takes this place because of the tremendous growth in the past 50 years.

Pope Pius XII called this development, generally known as the liturgical movement, "a sign of the working of the Holy Spirit in the Church." On the surface it includes all the growing responses, hymns and common recitation of prayers by the people at Mass, the sacraments, and other services of worship. Fundamentally it is a growth in interior understanding of deeper piety or devotion of mind

and will in the service of religion.

Already, even before the 2,500 Fathers of the Second Vatican Council assembled in St. Peter's basilica to take up the subject of sacred worship, there are clear indications of what has been growing slowly these past years. The many Sunday evening Masses throughout the city of Rome itself are one example. Another is the manner in which Mass is celebrated at each session of the council.

Only a few years ago the dialogue or spoken Mass seemed a novelty. Today it is only logical that all the congregation of bishops and others present should recite the Gloria, Sanctus, Lord's Prayer, etc. in union with the celebrant as the daily sessions of the council begin with Mass. A few years ago, at least in most places, Mass celebrated with the priest facing the people was considered an innovation or a historical restoration. Like the spoken or congregationally recited Mass, Mass facing the people is neither innovation nor mere restoration.

In both cases the purpose is a simple one — to involve the congregation, all the congregation, in the Church's public worship. If the pattern of the Masses at the council is followed, the people at large will appreciate the statements in the missal that Mass is offered to God in the name of Christ and of the Church, and that the nature of Mass demands that "all who are present should participate, each one taking his own proper part."

Ever since Pope John said in July, 1960, that the basic principles of the liturgical reform would be considered by the council, there has been great expectation, first, of changes in the liturgy's forms and prayers, but also of real encouragement for greater educational and instructional efforts by priests and teachers so that the Catholic people will know their part and do their part in the public worship of God.

At the same time, even if the council did not treat the subject or even if it offers little more than exhortation, the pattern of liturgical development now is completely clear. This makes it easier for the bishops to lay down broad principles and avenues of future growth.

The key to this development is found, for example, in the changed Holy Week services of 1956. The purpose, a fundamental one, was the greater holiness of the people at prayer. It was expressed in terms which must be at the basis of any decision the council makes: that the people may understand the

liturgy better and take a more active and spiritually fruitful role in it.

So far this has been accomplished — in the case of the rites of Holy Week — by simplifying and abbreviating the services, by arranging the different parts in a clearer order, by eliminating duplications. The Good Friday Communion service, once complex and confusing, now has four clear parts: lessons from the Bible, community prayer, veneration of the Cross, Holy Communion. The inner meaning of the Easter Vigil service in honor of Christ's Resurrection is revealed by the renewal of baptismal promises. A real tribute to Christ as King and Conqueror of death itself, is offered when the people walk in the Palm Sunday procession.

This is the pattern, to make the services themselves more comprehensible to all the people, with the hope that all may take a better and holier part. The ban of December was thus reversed within three months.

SIX MONTHS later the next episode began. Jesuit Father Alonso Schoekel of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome wrote an article in the Sept. 3 journal *Civiltà Cattolica* titled "Where is Catholic Exegesis Headed?" He claimed the way was indicated by the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII in 1943 and the Pontiff's message to the international Congress of Catholic Biblical Sciences held at Brussels in 1958.

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If the bishops merely accelerate this plan of liturgical renewal they will have accomplished much. They can hardly get down to details of prayer texts at Mass, the greater variety in Epistles and Gospels at Mass that has been so often suggested, etc. But they can open the doors to such desirable progress, to stimulate the faith and piety of all the members of the Church.

All this has a special meaning in view of the Pope's desire that the inner renewal of Church life should be a first step in making the Church better understood and admired by those separated from it. Orthodox and Protestant observers at the council are very much in the minds of all, and it is clear that nothing can make the Church more comprehensible and in fact more attractive than a renewed and vital life of Catholic worship.

# Are There 'Blocs' in the Council?

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Father Joseph M. Raya of St. George's Church, Birmingham, Alabama, where the eastern rite Mass was said and sung entirely in English, appealed to the apostolic delegate and was given three months to restore the practice of saying his Mass exclusively in Arabic or Greek.

An inquiry to the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church brought the reply that the ban against English had originated with the Holy Office, the Vatican's agency for defense of the faith.

The case was then appealed directly to Pope John himself and on March 31, 1960, the Holy Office issued a new ruling. "The use of the vernacular in the celebration of the Byzantine rite Mass is hereby permitted."

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section is written in poetic, epic, fictional or instructional form.

Monsignor Antonio Romeo of the Lateran University and former head of the Italian Biblical Association replied in the December issue of the university's publication, *Divinitas*. He took Father Schoekel to task for his "new" exegesis which, he said, was "inconsistent" with the traditional doctrine of the Church and accused the Jesuit of being on the "edge of heresy" and in

some of his positions guilty of "thoroughgoing disbelief."

The editors of *Divinitas* refused to accept an article from the Pontifical Biblical Institute defending Father Schoekel so a reply was published in the Institute's own journal, *Verbum Domini*, in January.

The unprecedented charge and counter-charge between two of Rome's most distinguished schools caused lively comment not only in Catholic

scholarly circles but also among biblical experts of other denominations.

At the height of the controversy, Pope John named Jesuit Father Ernest Vogt, rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, as a consultant to the preparatory Theological Commission for the ecumenical Council. The action was interpreted as the Pope's answer to those who wondered which side he was on.

In June, 1961, the Holy Office issued a "monitum" insisting on "prudence and reverence" in biblical discussions and warned about upsetting "the consciences of the faithful." The ruling was not a condemnation of Scripture experts who were headed in the "new direction" but a sharp slap for those who insisted on holding to the "traditional" position, at least in the quite bitter way they were holding to their position.

ONE TOPIC expected to come up for discussion at the current ecumenical Council is "freedom" in the Church.

The "freedom" issue will involve the limits to be given experts who are working on the frontiers of theological and social problems and whether priests and laymen on the lower levels of the Church's organized life are to be free in their contacts with Non-Catholics in the growing "ecumenical dialogue."

Suppression of the worker-priest project in France and the recent "monitum" against the writings of widely respected Jesuit Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin have discouraged the others who don't want to hazard their position in the Church despite their conviction that experiments need to be made to find better than present solu-

tions to complex modern problems.

Another aspect of this "freedom" issue is the need for a viable method of bringing summit actions into the valley — such as theological "dialogue" with Non-Catholics.

The new and numerous contacts of Vatican officials with religious leaders of other denominations to work toward unity will have little practical effect unless parish clergy and laymen are encouraged and directed in their day-to-day contacts with Non-Catholics.

Few American priests or laymen have any present notion as to how the example of Pope John is to be implemented and imitated at the local level.

Even more fundamental in the "freedom" debate is the question of toleration or religious liberty. Catholic Church history and recurrent "pressure" tactics give Protestants and Orthodox basis for their fear that Catholics in political power would restrict or destroy freedom of conscience to dissent.

President Kennedy's insistence during his 1960 campaign that he would remain independent of religious pressure in the White House stamped him in many Catholic minds as somewhat less than loyal to his Church. These Catholics confirmed the Protestant-Orthodox fears and isolated the President in his position.

This division of opinion in the Church reveals there is already a new "freedom" already in existence and that the Church today is much more than a mere static continuation of a medieval institution.

Those who have faith see also what Pope John hoped for — a new Pentecost — in which the Holy Spirit again speaks to the Church. It is for us at home to nurture the flame the Spirit kindles.

—Father Henry Atwell



This "college" of cardinals doesn't seem to have passed the fourth grade. Nevertheless, these young "prelates" played an important role in re-enacting for other youngsters at Blessed Sacrament School in Milwaukee the purposes and work of the Second Vatican Council.

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