

# Sacrament Rites to Stress People's Part

(The purpose of the following articles is to provide a general overview of the changes in the liturgical rites of the sacraments as proposed by the Council of Vatican II. The Council's official documents are available in the "Liturgy" section of the "Catholic University of America" and in the "Liturgy" section of the "National Catholic Reporter.")

**By FATHER FREDERICK McMANUS**  
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

The revolutionary constitution of public worship enacted by Vatican Council II not only concentrates on reforms affecting the Mass, the principal liturgy, but also provides for renewal of all the sacraments.

Chapter III of the Council's constitution is called "The Other Sacraments and the Sacramentals." It deals with the sacraments other than the Eucharist (to which Chapter II is devoted) and with the sacramentals or "lesser sacraments." It begins with a fundamental explanation: "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God."

Already the spirit of theological renewal is evident in the words of the Council. The least instructed Catholic sees in the sacraments sources of God's favor for himself ("to sanctify men") — in fact, there is always great danger of viewing the sacraments exclusively in this way, almost as mechanical and routine sources of inalienable grace.

The bishops of the Council bring to the fore two other elements: that the sacraments, all the sacraments, have a social dimension and public nature ("to build up the body of Christ, which is the Church"); that the sacraments require meditation, commitment, faith,

and devotion from those who take part in them ("to give worship to God").

The idea of the sacraments as channels of God's grace is not harmed or lessened by the Council's teaching. It is important to insist also on the venerable, ancient sacramentals, which, as the Council instructs, "are to be renewed and brought into line with the sacraments."

The sacraments (and the sacramentals and indeed all liturgical rites and goods) are signs which "with faithful and easily understood" signs and familiar with the complex service of Baptism will readily see how much revision and simplification is needed. In this and other cases what should be the most clearly expressed words (the "forms" of the sacraments) with the greatest significance and meaning to the people, have been set up until now in a language not understood by the participants.

Thus the Pope and the other Fathers of the Council decreed a reform and a revision, beginning with the introduction of the mother tongue — in the extent decided upon by the bodies of bishops in each country or region. The purpose of the reform is simply expressed: "With the passage of time there have crept into the rites of the sacraments and sacramentals certain features which have rendered their nature and purpose far from clear to the people of today; hence a some changes have become necessary to adapt them to the needs of our own times."

The first matter taken up by the Council, after the use of the vernacular languages, is the preparation of local or regional rituals for the celebration of sacraments and sacramentals.

The principle at stake is an important one: to correct the error that the Church's unity requires uniformity of practice, or stated positively, to show the special excellence, its diversity.

Proposed and rites are being prepared by the bishops in consultation with the laity, and the teaching of different nations and peoples.

In Chapter III of the constitution on the liturgy there are eight articles or paragraphs on the sacraments and sacramentals. They begin with the plan to revise the sacramentals, the spirit of formation and preparation before the beginning of an adult. Nowadays this period is often considered merely as a time of instruction, for acquiring information. The Council wishes it to recover the character of a period of spiritual formation, conversion of soul, prayer by the whole community for the candidate.

All the rites related to Baptism, the first of the sacraments, are to be reformed: for infants, for adults, for the reception of converts, for the first welcome of a child into the parish church after he has been received into the Church by Baptism administered in an emergency, etc. More important than these revisions is the attempt to unite the three sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist.

Confirmation is rarely thought of as completing Baptism and leading to the celebration of the Eucharist. The bishops now propose that this meaning should be brought out by the renewal of baptismal promises just before the rite of Confirmation and by celebrating Confirmation itself, where possible, during Mass.

In the United States most of the candidates for Confirmation have already received Communion for the first time, perhaps several years earlier. Nevertheless even in these circumstances it is still desirable that the newly confirmed should take part in Mass immediately and receive Communion. At least on that single occasion, the fullness of Christian initiation

would be evident. Christian commitment by Confirmation, Confirmation, leading to the celebration of the Eucharist.

**ALL SACRAMENTS** (and sacramentals, for that matter) are dependent on the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Church's life. The Church has always been aware of this position — this is the reason why the sacraments of Holy Orders is conferred during Mass. Now the Council wishes to show for, and encourage, the restoration of Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, religious profession, etc., as a part of Mass.

In the case of the Marriage rite, which is brief and simple in itself, the Council's objective is clear: it will take place during Mass after the reading of the Epistle and Gospel and the preaching of the priest or deacon; it will be followed by appropriate prayers of the people and by the nuptial Mass, in which the bride and groom take part.

Still on the subject of the Marriage rite, the constitution directs that, even when Marriage is celebrated apart from Mass, the Epistle and Gospel of the nuptial Mass should be read beforehand and the nuptial blessing given. This blessing will be revised to include mention of the groom as well as the bride, so that the equal fidelity will be expressed and taught.

Such changes require a future correction of ritual texts. This is not the case, however, with the Council's strong teaching on the sacrament of Anointing. In theory, the faithful are already instructed to summon the priest at the beginning of a serious illness and not to delay. But many things have been compared against a proper understanding of the sacrament of healing: the expression "last rites," the official name "Extreme Unction," the practice (of many centuries) of administering anointing after Viaticum.

Even priests sometimes demand proof of the seriousness of the illness or of the luminance of death before feeling free to administer this sacrament.

The Council has tried to change all this, by the better name for the sacrament: "Anointing of the Sick" by making clear that the Eucharist itself, Communion as Viaticum, is the sacrament which explains Anointing. It is a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived.

Finally, the revision of the sacramentals, blessings, processions, etc., should be mentioned. This must, in the words of the Council, "take into account the primary principle of enabling the faithful to participate intelligently, actively, and easily; the circumstances of our own time must also be considered."

Of special interest is the decision of the Council to provide sacramentals which may be administered by lay people, for example, the blessing of children or of the room by a father or mother; blessings to be given by catechists in the absence of a priest; specific blessings which may be prepared for lay religious superiors or for those in charge of schools.

The changes in the sacramental rites which the Council has decreed are important. The Council's teaching of doctrine is more important: the liturgy of sacraments and sacramentals gives the faithful access to the power of Christ's Easter passage from death to life. "To be the stream to divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ."

## Marriage Cases Mount For Rota

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Public entertainment, books and other publications have spread "dangerous ideas and mistaken attitudes," said the Pope.

**THE POPE** spoke to the judges of the Sacred Roman Rota, assembled Dec. 12 for their customary annual audience at the beginning of the new judicial year. Dean, or head, of the court, is a priest from Sheepshead, Pa., Msgr. Francis J. Brennan.

In his address to the court, the Pope spoke of the "abundant necessity of a recall to the preeminence of moral values."

He also praised pastoral undertakings which "give engaged couples and young married couples that moral and spiritual preparation which will illuminate and strengthen their conscience for the fulfillment of love and the firmness and real happiness of family life."

## Rota Prelate Dies at 81

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Pope Paul VI gave the absolution at the end of the Mass.

Cardinal Julien, long one of the preeminent jurists of the Church, died of leukemia at Rome's San Carlo hospital at age 81 on Saturday morning. Pope Paul, who had visited his bedside at the San Carlo last month.

The death reduced the College of Cardinals to 70 members, 30 of them members of the Roman Curia. The college's year membership was 87 in the spring of 1962.

Cardinal Julien had served as archbishop of Lyons, as secretary of the papal household and as the official custodian of the Second Vatican Council.

After adding to the decline

## Pope Pledges Refugee Aid

Jerusalem — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI is shown as he assented an American priest of Vatican financial assistance in alleviating the plight of Arab refugees in the Holy Land. Msgr. Joseph T. Ryan of New York (center), only U.S. priest to accompany the pontiff on his recent pilgrimage, is president of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. At right is Father Denis Mooney, O.F.M., field director for the Pontifical Mission. Pope Paul later gave \$10,000 toward the work. Msgr. Ryan is a native of Albany, N.Y.

## Movement of Change

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI, at the traditional first of the year audience to members of the Roman nobility and representatives of distinguished Rome families, stressed that today the Roman Pontiff holds the spiritual keys to the kingdom of Heaven rather than the keys of a material empire.

"We are now before you," he said, "with empty hands and can no longer offer you offices, benefits, privileges and advantages derived from the temporal state. We feel humbly open toward you."

However, the strength of the spiritual nature of his authority and the universal dimensions of the Church, saying that "today the papacy has a primary apostolic activity and its religious mission, a mission which cannot be modified profoundly by its structure."

"This movement of change," the Pope added, "is the challenge the Second Vatican Council has put to the Church."

The pontiff spoke in reply to a message of homage delivered by Prince Colonna, who occupies a number of posts in the papal household and is the official custodian of the Second Vatican Council.

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## Pope with 'Empty Hands' Asks Help from Laity

Vatican City — (RNS) — of papal temporal power, "which took place in such a well-known manner," Pope Paul said that "during that troubled and paradoxical period, you have given proof of an admirable loyalty, remaining united with the Pope... continuing yourselves with having retained your forms and titles although deprived of your relative and effective functions. For this great praise is extended to you."

The Pope said that with his sovereignty over the state of Vatican City assuring his independence from every worldly authority, he was thus absorbed in his spiritual functions.

"We have," he said, "an apostolic activity which, we would say, is simpler with respect to that of the past. The duty which is incumbent upon the Holy See is to wait upon the government of the universal Church and to arrive at an apostolic conversation with the modern world which today is agitated by a rapid and profound transformation."

"This obliges the Holy See to a realistic vision of things, and impels her to choose in her inheritance of institutions and customs that which is essential and vital, all the while strengthening her true traditional engagements."

Spokesman of the Vatican Council, the Pope said it "places upon the Church an enormous problem of bringing herself up to date which even the Holy See should examine for its own sake."

"Meaning," he added, "we are glad to assure you that the bond of our benevolence toward you will not only remain unaltered, but will also improve if we could have that help from you, that our collaboration, in a sense of what is called today the Christian testimony in society, the Catholic apostolate."

## Pope Speaks To Britons On BBC TV

London — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI, in his first recorded broadcast made specially for British television viewers, urged that the "dynamic power of the industrial world" be used for the benefit of all mankind.

Noting that the English-speaking peoples are in the lead in technological developments, the pontiff declared that "technology is one of the God-given means by which man can fulfill the Bible's command to 'subdue the earth and have dominion over it.'"

"It should be used to serve man and to unite him more closely with God and with his fellowmen," the Pope continued. "We just must not let us think of the horrors which follow the abuse of these new-found powers — and so we should — but on the other hand, we must look out to see the wonderful vistas opening before us if only we harness them with justice and with love."

Pope Paul spoke over the BBC television system in a program called "Portrait of the Pope," a special film on the pontiff's life made before his historic Holy Land pilgrimage. In his talk the pontiff also reiterated his pleas for world peace and Christian unity.

## Nuns Knit For Cows

Dublin — (RNS) — Nuns at the Convent of Mercy in Monaghan have had some strange tasks to perform, but none was as odd as the request from a local agricultural college.

The school asked the Sisters to make warm cloth coats for nine gray, fringed and one white, which the college was importing.

Complying with the request, the nuns had the coats ready by the time the plane carrying the cattle arrived at Dublin Airport. As the animals descended from the plane, college workers fitted them with the special coats to protect them from the cold.

The "clothing" will be worn by the cows until they have become accustomed to the Irish weather.

## Barnett Ban Explained

Chicago — (RNS) — A ban against Gov. Earl Warren of Michigan addressing students at Xavier University here was clarified officially by Father Patrick Ratterman, dean of men and Student Council moderator.

The priest said he had approved a student invitation to Gov. Warren to speak on the campus because the Governor stands on segregation, "is we feel, 'socially immoral,' and so on." The Roman Catholic college's ideas.

## Ecumenical Funeral Rite

Woodstock, Md. — (RNS) — Funeral services for Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., noted Catholic theologian, were impressively ecumenical.

Monarchs at the funeral Mass and at graveside services at Woodstock College included many Protestant and Orthodox scholars who had been associated over the years with the famed ecumenical leader.

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