

Litany Now 'in' at Liturgy

(The following article is the result of a series of interviews with the author of the new liturgical books, the Rev. Fr. Frederick J. McManus, N.C.W.A. News Service.)

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

Pope Paul VI in bringing into force the Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy has made active and understanding congregational participation in worship a primary goal.

Of the constitution's 130 sections, the first one singled out by the Pope for immediate action and application is Article 19:

"With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture. By so doing, pastors will be fulfilling one of the chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God; and in this matter they must lead their flock not only in word but also by example."

These words sum up the Second Vatican Council's rules for the promotion of liturgical instruction and active participation. And they were given first place in Pope Paul's document of Jan. 25, 1964, on carrying out the Council's plan. "By the very nature of things" the education and participation "come into force immediately."

When the Constitution on the Liturgy was promulgated on Dec. 4, 1963, at the papal session of the Council, a date was set for its regulations to become effective and universal law of the Church Feb. 18, 1964, the first Sunday of Lent. At the same time it was evident that many of the Council's de-

cretions would have to be delayed still longer — chiefly because they depend upon the revision of services, texts, prayers, etc.

Most of parts of the constitution which must wait further and specific action are evident enough. For example, the bishops decided that during Mass "a more representative portion of the holy Scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years" that is, in a kind of cycle.

Obviously, this provision cannot take effect until new lectionaries and altar missals are prepared and published. To clarify any doubts and to make sure that the liturgical renewal goes ahead without delay, Pope Paul's Jan. 25 instruction deals with several matters:

(1) Begging "all Christians and particularly all priests" to study the text of the constitution, the Holy Father urged bishops and pastors in the strongest terms to teach the people how to take part in the Church's worship, with an understanding of its "strength and inner value."

(2) Next Pope Paul set up a special commission to carry out the Council's decisions — particularly by revising the service books, such as the altar missal and ritual. Plans for this commission are found in the constitution itself. "The liturgical books," says the Council, "are to be revised as soon as possible, experts are to be employed on the task, and bishops are to be consulted, from various parts of the world."

(3) Finally the Pope settled specific questions and in a few cases anticipated the reform of rites and services: immediate permission to celebrate the sacraments of Confirmation and Matrimony during Mass; with special provision for Scripture readings and the nuptial blessing even at marriages celebrated apart from Mass; permission to suppress parts of the daily office of prayer, in the case of those bound to pray the office, without waiting for the revised texts.

SOME SPECIFIC directions given by the Pope insist on more serious steps to be taken without delay:

—Establishment of diocesan liturgical commissions to promote understanding and active participation in public worship by the people;

—The family or sermon preached at Mass in which "the mysteries of the Faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text" — recommended by the Council as a part of any and every Mass — required, as of Feb. 18, at every Sunday and holy day Mass when a congregation is present;

—the teaching of the liturgy in seminaries and similar institutions, to be revised according to the Council's legislation.

Because the Second Vatican Council has not yet determined with precision the role of "episcopal conferences" or bodies of bishops in the different countries, the Jan. 25 document of Pope Paul gives specific rules, such bodies, organized on a national basis, must include all bishops of dioceses, and may include coadjutor and auxiliary bishops. The enactment of decrees requires a two-thirds vote by secret ballot.

The importance of this rule lies in the authority conferred by the Council itself upon such bodies of bishops in liturgical matters, especially in the introduction of the vernacular language into the liturgy. A new papal directive is added, that translations of Latin liturgical texts are to be submitted to Rome for approval.

It is only natural that most attention should be concentrated upon future reforms, upon the commission set up to revise the rite of Mass and the sacraments, and upon the few changes which become effective without delay. Dramatic changes catch the eye; it is all the harder to propose, as Pope Paul and the other bishops have done, the broad program of study, instruction, education, and formation.

Just as there is no waiting period before the Council's doctrine or teaching about the liturgy becomes official or effective, so Pope Paul's first point, even before setting up the commission for liturgical reform, is the need for training and congregational participation that is both interior and exteriorly expressed.

If any specific norm is the key to the others, it is the insistence that Articles 15, 16, 17, of the constitution be put into effect immediately — that seminary programs be revised for the next scholastic year.

The Council has called for a thorough reappraisal of the teaching of dogmatic theology, scripture, spiritual theology, and pastoral theology — all to be unified in the exposition of "the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation" which is celebrated in Christian worship. The liturgy, which is faith in action, is to have new emphasis in the seminary program of studies and in the seminary life of prayer.

All this stems from the Council's recognition that "it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing" its purposes "unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and undertake to give instruction about it."

Irrespective of reforms and changes yet to come, the immediate need is education and participation — beginning with "priests, both secular and religious, who are already working in the Lord's vineyard" and with candidates for the priesthood in seminaries and other places of study.

Only this can bring to pass the high hopes of the Church, as expressed by the Pope and by all the bishops: participation by the Christian people as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people. (1 Peter 2:9; cf. 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their Baptism.



Hands joined in prayer. Pope Paul VI is shown on Ash Wednesday in penitential rites when he preached the sermon reported here.

Spiritual Strength In Penance

Vatican City—(RNS)—Pope Paul VI, at an Ash Wednesday general audience, told thousands of Romans and pilgrims that "the penitential side of the Christian life is profoundly wise and therefore worthy of being understood and accepted by us all."

The Pope began his talk by alluding to the imposition of ashes on the foreheads of the faithful at the beginning of Lent—reminding them that they are "dust" and unto "dust will return," and exhorting them to do works of penance during the holy season.

He said the penitential side of the Christian life is also, above all, "frankly realistic," because "it takes account of the wretchedness and tragedy hidden under the fact of things in life." At the same time, he stressed that the Christian doctrine points the way to the victory of good over evil and life over death.

Pope Paul said that "when the Church speaks of the precariousness of this earthly existence of ours, she is speaking of the most ordinary and evident reality of our present condition. She is making hers the hard, stark unanswerable language of the pessimistic philosophers: what is time but a race to death? What are the things of this world but vanities of vanities?"

The Pope said his penitential aspect is what drives away from the faith and from the Church so many souls, especially young people and sons of our times who aspire to joy, to beauty, to the enjoyment of life.

"Christianity is the religion of the Cross, and the Church is the teacher of mortification. All this is not in line with the modern spirit that aspires to happiness."

However, he continued "where earthly wisdom stops before the prospect of despair and death, our doctrine does not. On the other hand, being the religion of the spirit, it continues adding two further chapters, that the world judges to be paradoxical and past understanding."

"And yet here is a magnificent light for Christians. The first is a chapter on mortification, for penance, whether bodily or spiritual, is something to which Christ obliges all. One cannot say, as is written in the books of today, that Christianity is being made for the weak and that to bring them comfort it has to entice and soften them."

"No, Christianity is rather a sports ground of moral energy, a school of self-control and initiation in courage and heroism. It does not fear to educate in temperance, self-control, generosity, renunciation and sacrifice. It knows and teaches that the true and perfect man, the man who is pure and strong, the man who is capable of acting and loving, is a student of the discipline of Christ, the discipline of the Cross."

"And it is thus that the doctrine of the Church adds the last chapter to her lesson on human wretchedness and Christian mortification, proclaiming that the latter is the remedy for the first, with end in the victory of good over evil, of joy over pain, of saintliness over sin, of life over death."

In his talk Pope Paul stressed his desire to give the rites of the Church their "fullness, significance and efficiency." He said that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy approved by the Second Vatican Council was grounded on the truth that "prayer cannot be separated from life itself."

Scholarships
San Jose, Costa Rica—(NC)—Twenty-four per cent of the 10,229 students attending the Central American country's 39 Catholic schools and colleges were awarded scholarships by the institutions in 1963.

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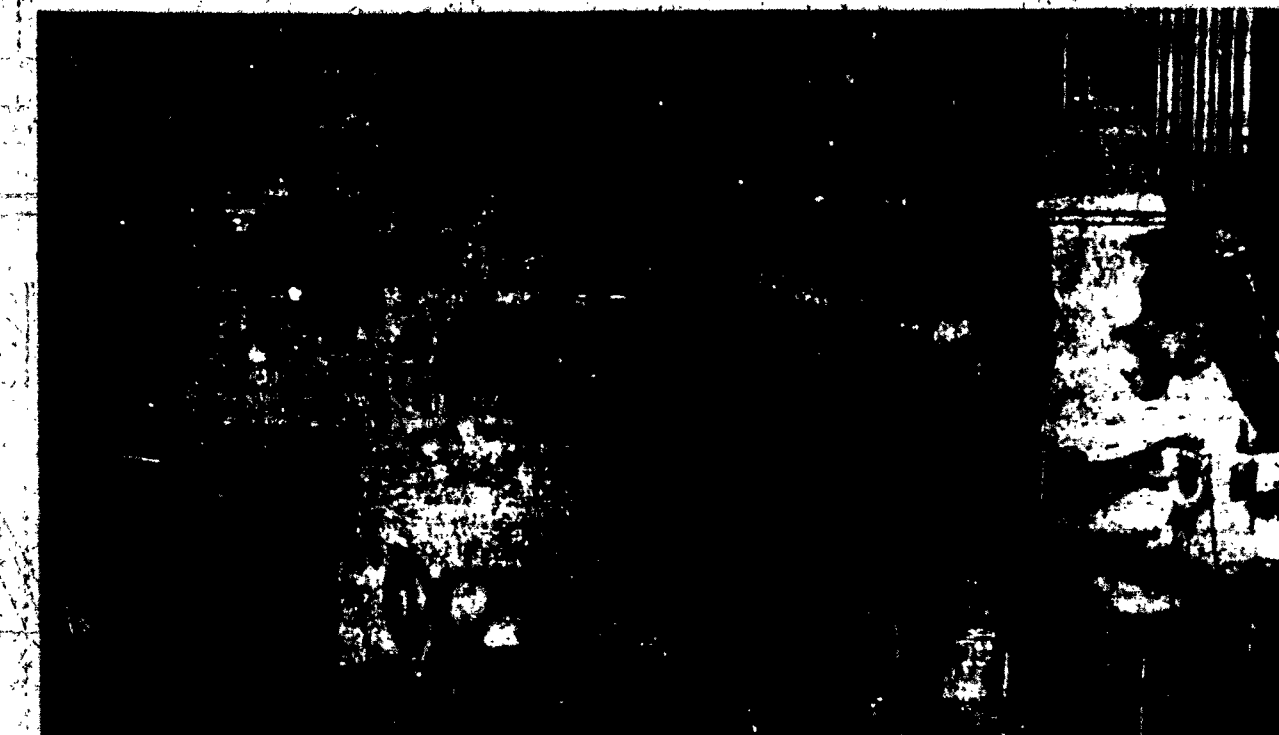
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March 8th Collection For Poor
Catholics of the Rochester Diocese will contribute on March 8th to the Church's worldwide program of aid to the needy. The U.S. Bishops Relief Fund provides food, clothing, medicine, technical training and other services to forty million people without regard to race, religion or color. This global work of charity is currently replenishing its depleted treasury by the contributions of the nation's parochial school children in their Lenten sacrifices. Adults will be asked to give their donation a mid-Lent.

Agreement Near With Czech Reds

Bona—(NC)—Vacant dioceses in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia will be filled by prelates who have not compromised themselves by belonging to the government-sponsored "peace priests" organization, it has been reported here.

KNA, the German Catholic news agency, said this is part of a preliminary agreement on Church-State relations reached by the Holy See and Czechoslovakia.

(No confirmation of the reported agreement was available at the Vatican.)

The news agency said that under the agreement Archbishop Josef Beran of Prague—released last October after 14 years of detention—will not resume his post. Instead, it added, the 78-year-old prelate will go to the Vatican and receive an appointment in the Roman Curia.

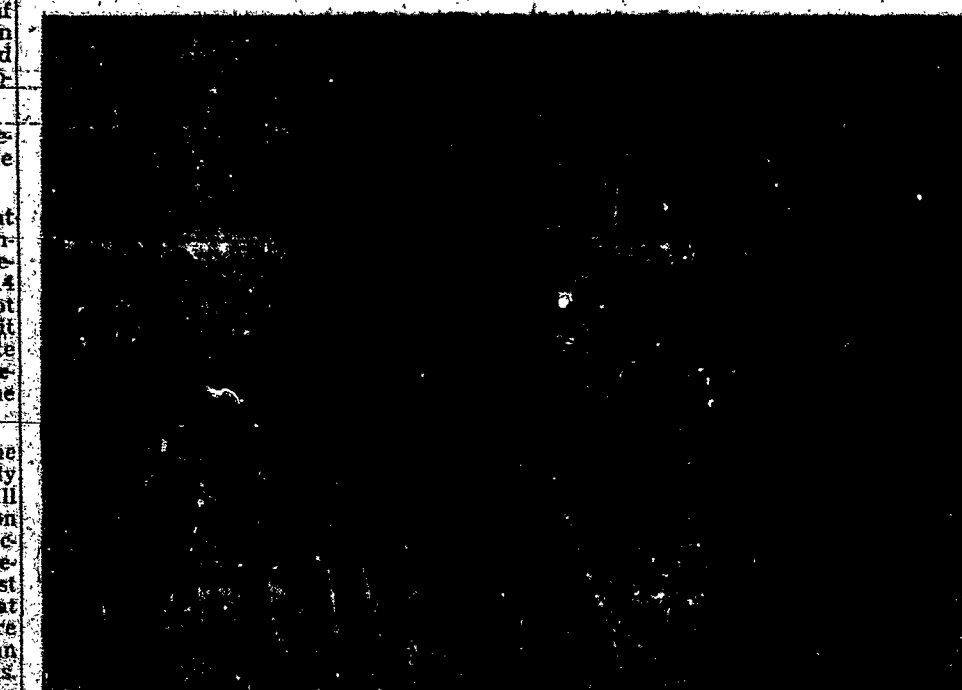
KNA REPORTED that the negotiations between the Holy See and Czechoslovakia are still going on. Under consideration is a relaxation of the restrictions now in force regarding religious instruction, it said. Last December, KNA said that Czechoslovak negotiators were then refusing to grant Vatican requests to ease the restrictions. But during the same month, the news agency said that the Czechoslovak Office for Religious Affairs had slightly relaxed regulations prohibiting certain priests from engaging in pastoral work.

Up to the time of the agreement, KNA said, the Czechoslovak government had insisted that secular administrators of vacant sees, who had been illegally named by the government, should be appointed as bishops of those sees. They have now

agreed to accept the appointment of prelates who have not been "peace priests."

In 1950, Bishop Andrea Sraha of Banská Bystrica died. The communist regime then appointed Father Jan Decht, whom it excommunicated. Father Decht, described as a "faithful servant of the republic," as the diocese' "ecclesiastical administrator."

The Czechoslovak Bishops protested against this illegal government action and the Holy See excommunicated Father Decht. This was the first of a long series of such illicit government appointments.



Religion In Pictures in Korea

Taegu, South Korea—(RNS)—The world of religion in photographs was brought to sidewalk strollers in Taegu, South Korea, through the ingenuity of The Catholic Shiba (Times) newsweekly of the Taegu archdiocese. Its editors displayed some 250 Religious News Service photos in an outdoor exhibit which drew large crowds despite mid-winter weather. On one day 2,500 persons stopped to inspect photographs of Pope Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council, and unusual religious developments around the world. In picture, Magr. James M. Rl, Vicar General of the Taegu archdiocese, is shown reading captions designed to interest Catholic and Non-Catholic alike.

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