

'Meaningful' - Reason For New Rites in Church

By REV. WILLIAM SHANNON (This is the last of three articles by Father Shannon of Marquette College telling how and why the Catholic Church is changing its ways of worship.)

After the public response of faith in the Creed, the parish family is ready to begin the second great part of the Mass — the Eucharistic Liturgy, the great action of praise and thanksgiving, which makes present for us in symbolic reality the sacrifice that wrought our redemption.

The Eucharistic Liturgy begins with the offertory rite. Before we can offer our thanksgiving, our Eucharist, to God, there must lie upon the altar earthly gifts which are to be transformed into heavenly gifts before the Eucharistic prayer there makes an offertory.

Preparing the Gifts

The offertory rite in the Roman liturgy is overburdened with prayers which, though beautiful in themselves, tend to obscure the basic purpose of the offertory and make it, as Jungmann has called it, "a little canon." The offertory has one definite utilitarian purpose: to prepare the gifts at the altar and to have the celebrant say a prayer over the gifts dedicating them to the sacrifice.

We are scarcely justified therefore in continuing to refer to the offertory as a principal part of the Mass — as if it were on a par with the Canon prayer or the Communion banquet.

It seems undesirable, therefore, not to say misleadingly, to have the people sing in English during the offertory the prayer said in Latin by the priest (These are the priest's prayers and do not in any way belong to the congregation).

A more meaningful pattern is to have the people sing an appropriate offertory chant or psalm, while the priest is preparing the gifts and saying the prayers. By this singing together the people prepare themselves as living gifts which are to be offered in and with Christ.

The offertory rite closes with the accept of the prayer over the gifts. The priest prays in the name of the whole assembly, begging God to accept the gifts of his people as a part of the perfect gift of His Son. The people join their personal prayers to this official prayer of the whole community. Then they make the prayer their own by responding "Amen."

It is meaningful to pause for a moment after the Amen which concludes the offertory rite. Before beginning the dialogue responses which introduce the great prayer of the Canon. This will be a sign to the congregation of the transition from the offertory to the Canon. It will help them to enter more meaningfully into the great Act of Thanksgiving.

Canon of the Mass

The Canon begins with the celebrant's exhortation to the people to "lift up their hearts and to offer a Eucharist to the Lord, to speak a blessing thank fully to our God. After this introductory dialogue there comes the Preface-Canon. Often people do not realize that the Preface-Canon is really a single prayer. They do not realize this because of the way in which this one prayer is broken up into several smaller prayers in the modern Missal.

Yet it is really a single prayer of offering, thanksgiving and praise — in which Christ takes the references of His people and unites them to Himself and offers both them and Himself to the Father as the perfect gift.

The term "preface" is often misunderstood. As Jungmann has pointed out, it must not be taken as an introduction to the Canon. Rather, it is the whole meaning of the "prayer of offering" — a speaking before God

and the community. It is a speaking out, a proclaiming of God's mighty deeds in times past.

God is blessed, praised for what He has done; and this praise culminates in the renewal, in sacramental sign, of the greatest deed He has ever done on man's behalf.

Consecration

This mighty deed began when God's beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and worshipful hands, and, with His eyes fixed heavenward to you, God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to You, making a Eucharist, broke and gave to His disciples saying: "Take it, all of you, and eat of it: For this is My Body." And in the same manner He did with the wine.

This is the great mystery of faith at its peak. This is the remembrance, in symbolic reality of God's greatest deed: the passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. This we do in memory of Him, proclaiming the death of the Lord till He come.

The Christ-event—His death, resurrection and glorification—is taken out of the realm of ancient history and becomes a reality for us now in the sign of the bread and the wine. This sign is a marvellously efficacious sign — making present for us the glorious Body of Christ — that deathless, immortal Body enthroned in glory at the right hand of the Father. It is this Body, as life-giving Food which we are to receive, which holds out to us the prospect of glory for our own corruptible bodies. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life everlasting and I will raise Him up on the last day." (John 6:55)

Our Gifts Accepted

But before we receive the life-giving Bread, we offer to God this sacrifice which is perfect, this sacrifice that is holy, this sacrifice which is without blemish, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Cup of everlasting salvation. We ask that God look on our offering with favor and acceptance, accepting it as He accepted the sacrifice of His holy servant Abel and His high priest, Melchizedek — so that we all, receiving His Son's most sacred Body and Blood by partaking of the altar, may be filled with every blessing and grace from heaven.

It is through Christ that we ask for it. It is through Him that God the Lord unceasingly creates all good things and bestows them on us. Through Him, we pray in the great Trinitarian doxology, and with Him and in Him are given to You, God the almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory forever and ever. And the consecration brings the Eucharistic Prayer to a conclusion with the great affirmation of the Amen.

A brief pause after the Amen — before the celebrant begins the introduction to the Lord's prayer — will help the congregation to see the transition from the sacrifice of praise to the Eucharistic meal.

Communion

The Eucharistic banquet begins with the most ancient of communion prayers, the Lord's prayer — which sets the theme for the Communion rite. The kiss of peace (or at least the prayer for peace) is our spiritual preparation (as the breaking of the bread was once the physical preparation) for the Communion. The purpose of this prayer is to make us realize the social implications of the Eucharist: the Bread we receive made one from many grains of wheat will unite us to the whole Christ — Christ the Head and all the members of His Body.

It is this sense of communion which we need especially to think about the Mass and for our meaningful participation in the worship of the Church

direction is to invite the people to sing a Communion chant as they go in procession to the Communion table.

This gesture of doing something together will help deepen their insight into the meaning of this sacrament. It will help them (and us also) to see that receiving Christ in the Eucharist ought to have some relation to meeting Christ in my neighbor.

It will point up the hypocrisy involved in wanting to meet Christ in the Eucharist, yet not wanting to meet Him in our fellow-man; the hypocrisy of wanting to honor the Eucharistic Body of Christ, while ignoring His Mystical Body. We cannot divide Christ: the Christ who is in the Eucharist from the Christ who is in our neighbor.

It is true that getting people to go to Communion as a group rather than merely as individuals, singing hymns as they go will not of itself make them more charitable, more honest in their dealings with one another; by itself it will not root out ethnic or racial prejudices. But we do tend to externalize what we really believe. These external gestures, if done with understanding, will help them to appreciate what the Eucharist really is — that it is precisely a social sacrament, that as St. Thomas says, its proper effect is to produce and promote the unity of the entire Mystical Body of Christ.

Understanding what the Eucharist really is will help us to open our hearts to respond to the grace of the sacrament. It will make us more conscious of the social implications involved in eating the Body of the Lord.

In the new Communion form we say: "The Body of Christ." The people respond "Amen." Their Amen is their personal acceptance of the Body of Christ; yet not His Eucharistic Body only, but His Mystical Body too. For we cannot divide Christ. We cannot separate Christ in the Eucharist from Christ in our neighbor.

After all have shared in the communion meal, the priest prays the Communion prayer. It is really a continuation of the people's hymn — a reflection upon God's great gift and an expression of the joy and the thanksgiving of the parish family.

Then the priest greets the people and invites them to pray again. This is the Post-Communion, the priestly prayer, in which the head of the parish family asks God that all may live out in their daily lives the union with Christ and with one another that He produced in them in the Communion. Again the people express their approval of the prayer and make it their own by responding Amen.

The Dismissal

The celebration concludes with a brief dismissal service. The priest greets the people and dismisses them "Go, the Mass is ended." He sends them back to their daily life and daily concerns, where they are to live out God's Word and God's Gift which they have shared in the Mass. As a sign of this obligation the priest blesses his people.

While the priest reads the last Gospel, the people sing their closing hymn of joy and thanksgiving — which continues till the priest and his servers have left the altar.

This then is the basic structure of the Mass.

1. the brief entrance rite
2. the Liturgy of the Word
3. the Eucharistic Liturgy — which is a sacrifice of praise and a meal
4. the dismissal rite

This structure, which is set forth in the Vatican Council's Liturgy Constitution, must be the basis for our way of proceeding, the whole meaning of which we need especially to think about the Mass and for our meaningful participation in the worship of the Church



U Thant Greets Rome Delegate

United Nations — (RNS) — Msgr. Alberto Giovannetti, the Holy See's first permanent observer to the United Nations, is welcomed at a reception in his honor. He is greeted here by Secretary General U Thant (right). With them is Antonio Alvarez, El Salvador Ambassador to the U.N. The reception was sponsored by Pax Romana, International organization of Catholic graduates and students, and by El Salvador's Permanent Mission to the U.N. Speaking before some several hundred guests, Msgr. Giovannetti assured them of the Vatican's acceptance of the U.N.'s aims and objectives.

Aim of LBJ Task Force

End Stalemate On School Aid

Washington — (NC) — A possible new effect by the Johnson administration to solve longstanding controversies over federal aid to education is seen in recommendations reportedly to be made by a presidential task force on education.

It is reported that the recommendations will include abandonment of the effort to obtain across-the-board Federal aid in favor of so-called categorical assistance for specific educational purposes, and broadening the participation of church-related schools in Federal aid programs.

Reports, published originally in the Washington Post, said these are key points of recommendations to be made by a task force headed by John W. Gardner, president of the Carnegie Foundation.

The task force was said to favor the categorical approach to education aid most strikingly embodied in the National Defense Education Act of 1958. The original NDEA provided Federal assistance for teaching of science, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

A three-year extension of the program beyond 1965, signed last month by President Johnson, expanded the program to include aid for the teaching of English, reading, history, geography and civics. It also increased the amount of money

Women's Club Sets Educator

Annual Communion Breakfast of the Catholic Women's Club will be held Sunday, Dec. 6, at 11 a.m. at Sheraton Hotel. Miss Mary Wintish is chairman.

Newly admitted members who will participate in the breakfast program are the Messing Henry M. Albert, James R. Gosjello, John D. Fleming, Margaret Hyde, Katherine Kimble, Robert Knapp, Alice T. McCarragher, Edwin W. Martin, Rudolph Schwener, Joseph R. Wahl, Thelma Miller and the Messing Carmel Hartell, Grace Herbert, Martha M. Irwin, Frances Leach, Marie Zimmerman.

The club announces formation of an afternoon mission group by Mrs. Catherine A. Cushman, acting chairman. A permanent chairman will be elected at the next meeting. The mission group is accepting extra sheets for cancer preparation and bandage rolling.

B. Forman Holds Yule Breakfast

Seven hundred employees of B. Forman Midtown, Culver-Ridge and Brighton, were guests of the store at the annual Christmas breakfast Monday in the Manger Hotel Ballroom.

Members of the store's 25-Year Club, including 22 now retired, were cited as "men and women of distinction."

Service pins were presented by Maurice R. Forman, president, to 26 coworkers reaching 5-year plateaus of continuous employment from 10 to 40 years.

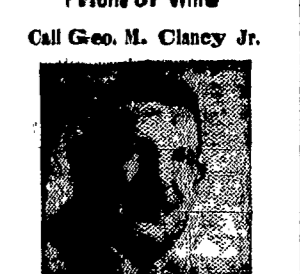
A program of music featured popular folk numbers by Eastman School students.

The Very Rev. Charles J. Lavery, president of St. John Fisher College, delivered a holiday-season message.

Master of ceremonies was John D. Roche of Forman's.

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