



The Dutch Liturgy Pioneers

By DENNIS J. GEANEY, O.S.A.

The Augustinian church in Nijmegen is one of the centers for liturgical experimentation in Holland. In a visit to Holland I was anxious to participate in their Sunday liturgy.

Since the Dutch Church has the reputation for being "away out" and since they have anticipated in their liturgical practice what was being discussed as possibilities for the universal Church at both Vatican II and the recent Bishops' Synod, I looked upon my visit to Nijmegen as a futu-rana.

I did not know what to expect. I am familiar with some of the liturgical happenings at home. I saw on the Huntley-Brinkley telecast clips from the People's Mass in Washington, D.C. People were carrying in procession balloons, and banners, and placards on their way to a civic auditorium.

I have seen imaginative offertory processions, various ways of giving the kiss of peace, home Mass liturgies and a variety of novel musical motifs. Would Nijmegen be a case of oneupmanship? How bizarre would the liturgy be on this Church frontier?

I arrived early for the last morning Mass which would include the solemn profession of five Augustinians. I sought out the celebrant of the Mass to get clued into the order of the liturgy. He assured me that the liturgy had been planned by a group. Liturgy in Holland is not sloppy or haphazard. Planning and organization is part of the Dutch temperament.

For the Occasion

Although it was the Feast of Christ the King, the theme they had chosen was the call of Abraham. Abraham typifies the young man making a profession in a religious Order in an era of unprecedented change. He leaves behind even the securities of knowing what religious life will be like in the future and has only the security of his faith.

Like Abraham the call is sufficient to set him on the pilgrimage. He showed me the collect, secret, and postcommunion prayers along with the bidding prayers and the homily. All were original compositions to fit the occasion.

The Church began to fill up. In fact it was filled when I looked for a seat and had to be satisfied with a folding chair. There was no triumphal processional or lusty recessional as we are gradually adapting in the United States.

The service began with an extensive reading from the sermons of St. Augustine. In Holland there is great emphasis on the liturgy of the Word. The profession service took place in this part of the service. The canon was extremely short but everyone was following it with rapt attention. At the same time in Rome the Bishops were debating at the Synod the feasibility of a choice of canons. Here it was a reality. I asked the celebrant afterwards if there was a copy in English

available. He said that he did not have a copy but that he had heard that an Episcopal Church in England was using a translation of theirs.

'Rapt Attention'

The service lasted an hour and fifty minutes with the people engaged in it with rapt attention. I have always maintained that the length of a service is not the factor in sustaining interest but it is the content and the way it is put together.

In the past six months I was bored to the point of leaving at an ordination. At a consecration of bishops I painfully endured the service. Without knowing a word of Dutch my attention and the attention of the entire congregation was sustained without a break until the end.

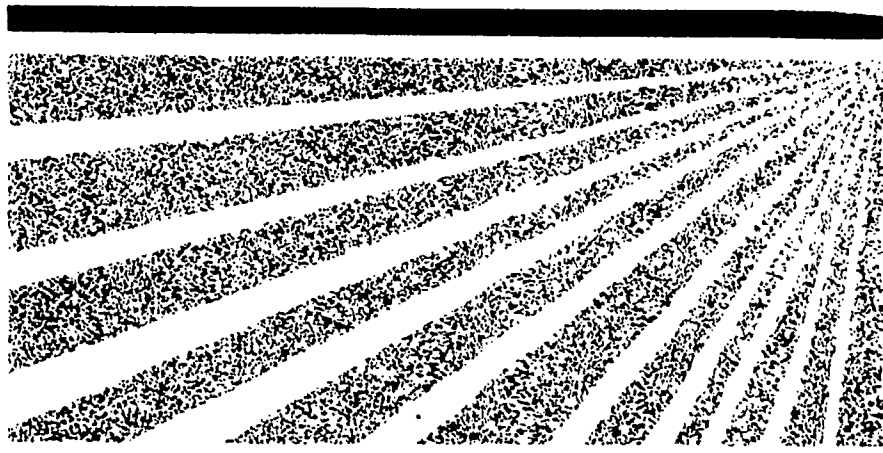
The music was unlike the American folk or guitar Mass as night is from day. It was closer to Gregorian chant in its sobriety. The music director had a doctorate and much ex-

perience. People were not singing all the time and never were they reaching an emotional pitch.

Like good Gregorian chant the music was meant to be secondary and at the service of prayer or worship and never used to drain the emotions. Another nauce to the service that we lack in this country is the use of silence. There were long pauses and never a hurried movement.

At Communion people received communion in their hands and then placed it in their mouths themselves. If they wanted it on their tongue, they could do so by simply holding out their tongue. Everyone I saw receive Communion received it in their hand.

If this disturbs you and you want it stopped, do not write to the Vatican. The Roman officials have been to Nijmegen like myself to observe. It is quite obvious that the Dutch laity want it this way and it is not something the priests have imposed upon them.



Spectrum Of Opinion

Let's Communicate... On Civil Disobedience

In the past few months we have received many letters asking us to comment on priests and civil disobedience. We wish to express our views to Rev. William Graf, Chaplain of Ithaca College for his views and comments on this topic.

To form a truly Christian conscience we must be sincere, honest, informed and mature. Hopefully the guidelines Christ set down at the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper about the love of God, self and others will be the guidelines in forming our consciences about the laws and orders issued by the state.

Man is a social being with a common Father whose kingdom is being formed in the contemporary world. His actions influence the whole community for better or worse. The greater responsibility of office the greater is his influence on the community. With position of authority comes position of responsibility. Not only does a priest have a position of authority, but he is also a servant responsible to the needs of the people. He is not his own. His words should reflect the spirit of Christ in the pulpit as well as before any assembly. The words of Christ fell on unwilling ears. People found his sayings hard turned their backs and walked with him no longer. Some of the words that priests speak are difficult to accept and people walk out of the Church.

As long as the priest proclaims the message of Christ, he is a prophet — the mouth of the Lord. Christ was gentle and understanding with the poor and ignorant. On still other occasions, He became angry with the leaders who sacrificed the spirit of the law to unbearable legal prescriptions. Some questioned the miracles performed on the Sabbath day. "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" Some laws supercede others. It is more important to stay at the bedside of a sick baby than to fulfill the Sunday Mass obligation. Christ saw that it was more important to make a man walk again than to fulfill a Sabbath regulation.

We can easily detect Christ's great concern for the poor. He reminded the disciples of John the Baptist that it was a sign of who he was. If we listened to the words of Christ about loving our neighbor, turning the other cheek, letting our light shine before men, denying ourselves, doing the will of the Father (all written down by the tax collector — turned — Apostle, Matthew), but failed to witness their truth in the actions of Christ, we would have little reason to believe in Him. Words are cheap. To give public witness to the message of Christ requires courage.

Because laws are usually made for public order and for the good of the whole community, Christian theology teaches that we must obey just laws. Christ reminded the people that they should "render to Caesar's" by paying the tax. Just

Caesar's" by paying the tax. Just taxes, for example, pay the salaries of officials and public servants employed to serve the needs of the citizens. It can be as wrong to cheat on taxes as to steal from a neighbor. Most people would normally render obedience to a just law passed by legitimate authority for the common good.

The Real Problem

The problem facing most people (and so the servants of the people, the priests) are the unjust laws and commands of authority. Are we required to obey an unjust command? The answer seems obvious and simple. No, we are not obligated to obey an unjust law or immoral command. Yet, is it that simple?

Most adults are familiar with the pictures of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. We remember the defense of the German officers. "We were only following orders." The verdicts of their trials indicate that each person was responsible for what happened — not just the system nor chiefs-of-staff. Some were Roman Catholics who knew what was going on and even obeyed the commands. As responsible Christians, if they felt that the commands were immoral — or the anti-Semitic laws were unjust, should they have obeyed? To disobey would have been "civil disobedience." Can we supposedly mature Christians condone mass murder? Would it be just to bomb a city killing 136,000 non-combatants? Does the end always justify the means? If so, where do we stop? Where were the ecclesiastical leaders during Hitler's regime? The outspoken ones were in jail. A German priest, Father Delp, imprisoned and later executed, commented about the Church. "We have destroyed man's confidence in us by the way we live."

Making Sound Judgements

With the emotion of contemporary problems besieging us from every side, it is often difficult to make a sound judgment about the justice or injustice of a law. The deaths of millions of black people will weigh heavily on our national conscience for years to come. It is true that we did not directly cause their deaths. Could we be indirectly responsible for some of them because we neglected to support changes in unjust laws?

Could we look into the eyes of a starving child and refuse to feed it because it was a black baby? As long as you have done it to the least of my brethren, you have done it to me. Enter into the kingdom prepared for you." These are the words of Christ — feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned. Until recently many of our laws denied basic needs to some of our fellow human beings. A Catholic hospital refused to accept a dying Negro as a patient because it was against the state law to integrate a hospital. Was this just or charitable? Where was the voice of the priest or sister in charge?

It is possible to conceive that these are times when a priest (or any citizen) may be disobedient to an unjust civil law. Hopefully, he will do so in the spirit of Christ after long hours of prayer and sincere consultation with others. His actions will presumably be mature, responsible and for the good of the whole community although it will cause discomfort in some areas. The priest is not just a private citizen. He is a leader. The task he assumed on the day of ordination bound him to a total commitment to the service of all the people of God.

Most people object to the way civil disobedience is expressed. Some acts are done prudently and effectively because they are done after deliberation. Other acts smack of sensationalism and so are repugnant to even those sympathetic to a particular cause. The methods of expressing civil disobedience should be consistent with one's vocation as a Christian, a teacher, a servant, a priest.

MISTER BREGER



"Anyway, dear, congratulations on a most dramatic performance of outraged innocence..."



The Real People

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Some weeks ago the TV had a program which featured some of the maddest going on within the Church. I didn't see it, but several spoke of it with feelings varying from horror to dismay to anger. The feature showed a Catholic group in Washington called "The People." It showed a public meeting which included 1) a woman smoking at Mass (to demonstrate informality), 2) a bearded man laughing (to manifest the emergence of the layman) at the reading of the Archbishop's restrictions of the group's experimentation, 3) the letting off of balloons at Mass (to illustrate joy in the Risen Savior).

We might as well be calm. "The People" group includes many sound, solid, sane Church-loving members. I know of some of them personally. But the extreme Bohemian Group make a more bizarre picture, hence more interesting. So normalcy stays hidden. The bizarre is projected to the TV audience. A caricature troubles the minds of Catholics and non-Catholics who seek peace and stability within the Church.

A Christmas letter came from a couple whom I knew at Sampson College 20 years ago. It is so solid, so sound, so truly "The People," it must be shared. It is an account of a God-

loving family devoted to the Church. The wife is a convert, and almost the most intelligent person I ever instructed. She wrote the letter, beginning with the birth of their eleventh child: "Joseph David made an early appearance on January 8. It was so early (he was expected February 20) that he was born at home and delivered by his dad! Now isn't that an exciting adventure for a couple at our stage of life."

"The thing that really struck me was that I had always wanted Dick to be present at the births of the children and due to hospital regulations had never succeeded in having him with me. It had also been a secret wish to have a baby at home without all the fuss and bother they go through at the hospital. But I never would have had the nerve to plan it that way."

"In one simple course of events, the good Lord answered both these prayers, and it truly seemed a marvelous thing."

"You asked in your last letter what our attitudes were: liberal, conservative or moderate Church progress."

"Most all the changes have been welcome ones, because they bring more meaning to the liturgy rather than a mechanical

worship. The social participation of the Church (racial problems, etc.) is long overdue, also.

"There has to be a voice from Rome regarding problems of family planning. I feel Pope Paul has waited too long to make clear what the Church's judgment on this question will be."

"It is not that important to us, but for many it is crucial, especially the very young married couples."

"We have seen God in our marriage, how with more children than we possibly could have planned to feed and clothe there is somehow enough—not always all they would like when they look around and compare. Yet I believe that this is better for them than too much of everything and nothing to ever need."

"Both of us made Cursillos about two years ago, and these two years have seen more progress in marriage growth than the previous 18!"

There is a catchy tune and wonderful words from a show called: "Up, Up with the People." Families such as this give confidence in the future of the Church — for these are "the People."

Joseph A. Breig

Stand or Kneel For Holy Communion?

A reader, writing to a Catholic newspaper not long ago, said:

"I am neither a Conservative nor a Traditionalist. Most of the changes (in the Church) I have embraced, and learned to love."

"However, when I received my God in Communion standing up, I felt as though I were slapping the face of my Lord and Master."

The letter, I feel sure, voiced the sentiment of many. There is a tendency in all of us to take for granted — without really thinking about the matter—that our accustomed ways are the only right ways, or at least the best ways.

This is a mistake. It narrows

our view and restricts our experiences and joys. The scope of our wisdom and happiness depends upon the extent to which we encompass all reality, love it, and try to understand it.

Among the Chinese, the color of mourning is not black, as with us, but white. If this makes the Chinese seem odd to us, it likewise makes us seem odd to them.

But the truth is that neither they nor we are odd. Their use of white and our use of black for requiem Masses are equally pleasing to God.

Why should anyone shrink from receiving Communion while standing? Jesus did not kneel in the Temple; he stood, according to the custom of his people.

When we listen to the Word

of God in the Gospel at Mass, we stand. When a guest—especially a woman—enters a room, we rise to show our respect and hospitality. At a banquet or a meeting, we honor a distinguished person with a standing ovation.

Just as it is difficult for some nuns to break their attachment to a mode of dress which they think of as symbolizing their religious commitment, so it is not easy for some of us to let go of certain hymns and prayers, or of the "quiet Mass," or of Latin in the liturgy.

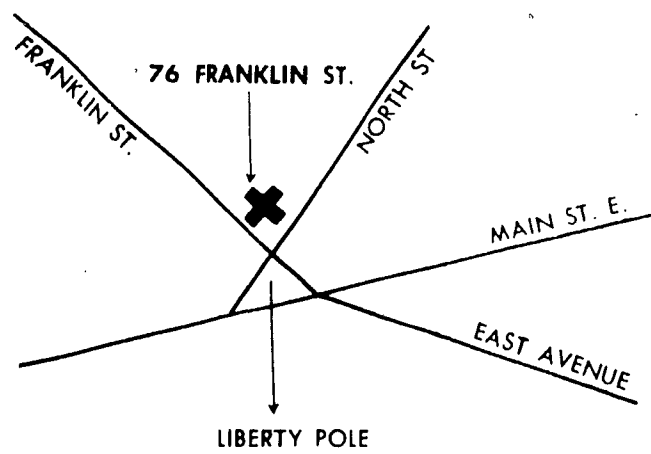
Yet the Holy Spirit, through Vatican II, has made clear that we are to be shaken loose from our attachments to customs, and are to be led to a realization of the deep realities underlying them. We might as well go along quietly.

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