

Liturgy of the Future... Wonderful Things to Come

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The first thrust of change was in the area of the liturgy. The participation of the people in the Mass, which Pius X had called for 50 years before, was at last facilitated by the removal of many barriers—the situation barrier, the language barrier, the ritual barrier.

A Liturgy Commission was formed, according to the mandate of Vatican II. The Music Commission, which has existed only on paper, was augmented with new members and reactivated into a genuine working arm of the diocese.

So we come to the end of Rochester's century. The signs of the times are prophetic of wonderful things to come. Our second century is bringing us out of the "winter of our discontent" into a "second Spring". The Church is coming alive in the minds and hearts of countless Catholics, in a way that no one now alive has ever experienced.

In spite of stresses and strains, of defections and drop-outs from the Church, the vision of faith can discern a mighty forward movement bringing the

Church to a new maturity.

Already, even though much remains to be done, we can sense a much deeper involvement of our Sunday congregations at worship. This goes far deeper than merely singing or speaking out at Mass.

Wherever the vernacular of the Mass is freely spoken, the Word sensitively proclaimed in daily homilies, and the eucharistic action so done as to establish a live rapport between all who are in the assembly, the invitation to "lift up your hearts" will always strike a responsive chord among the devout people of God. The Spirit of God is moving over the parishes, and a new world is being formed.

What more are we to work for in liturgical development, as our new century begins?

1. We must work for the establishment of smaller parishes, or at least for smaller Mass centers within the present framework. The trend must be toward closer interpersonal dynamics in the liturgy.

The diocesan permission for home Masses is a step in this direction; but these are not

the ultimate solution. The home Masses are helpful in giving people a sense of unity and solidarity around the altar. But if these were the rule, the Church would be much too fragmented, and the sense of the larger community would be lost.

On the other hand, the oversize parish and church should become a bygone relic before very long.

2. The churches of tomorrow (a few of today's churches are showing the way) must follow a new design, which places the altar in the center, or at least within the orbit of worshipping people, with lighter seats or chairs to allow for different groupings. This would eliminate the straitjacketing of our congregations and their arrangement in awkward unrealistic patterns.

3. Baptisms will become more genuinely celebrations by the entire parish, with the baptismal font located on an axis with the altar. There will be prebaptismal instruction of the parents and the godparents. Music will become a part of the joyful rite.

4. First Communion will

become a family-centered occasion. The parents will instruct their child and present him for the pastor's testing and approval. Then the child will receive his First Communion with his parents and brothers and sisters.

5. Penance will become a community-oriented sacrament. Private confession will remain as the norm, but the preparation for it will be in community (a small group, of course), with a Bible lesson and a group response of prayer. The penance could be performed as a social prayer, and the absolution given together by all the priests who heard the confessions in private.

6. Weddings will change more and more into liturgies of worship and thanksgiving, moving away from the pomp and circumstance of so many weddings of the past and present. The bride will not be alone, but the bridegroom and bride together, at the center, and both of them accompanied to the altar by their parents.

7. A revised funeral liturgy will bring the joy of Christ's

paschal mystery into what for centuries was made a lugubrious occasion. It will temper the sorrow of the bereaved with the assurance of resurrection and life which the funeral Mass is intended to celebrate. The color will no longer be black, and the texts denoting terror and ruin will give place to others which bespeak light, happiness and peace.

Since the liturgy is the celebration of our communion with God, and of His communion with us, the emphasis of change will be upon that which is expressive, realistic, dramatic—something which is not superimposed, but which grows out of the lives of real people—something which needs to be patterned, so as to keep its continuity with the past and with the whole Church, and is at the same time sufficiently flexible so as to be in tune with the present.

These will be the tasks of pastoral, liturgical direction in Rochester's second century. It is our confident hope, and should be our prayer, that they may be fulfilled by as many devoted leaders and teachers as a kind Providence raised up during our first century.

The Breaking Down of Barriers Between People

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they need to confront new problems.

"I think the big church buildings must give way to smaller structures. There must be more smaller group liturgies in smaller places. There must be teams of priests assigned to various critical ministries.

At St. Peter and Paul parish in Elmira, Monsignor Philip E. McGhan puts top priority on ministry to the elderly and to the black community on the Eastside, helping the Church to relate to them.

The situation in Elmira has changed definitely with urban renewal; well over a hundred and fifty homes have been removed in the past eight months. Finding housing for the relocated families has been a key issue for the parish as well as for the urban renewal and social agencies.

Monsignor McGhan makes an educated guess that there will be a more equitable distribution of races in the inner city area, with new housing and the advent of a state mental hospital and county hospital complex,



Mercy Sister Eileen Rapposki talks with two youngsters in Elmira ecumenical summer program. Home visiting and finding housing for Negro families has top priority in Elmira social work.

though much education toward rehabilitation will be needed also.

Another church-related area of the inner-city is the Sisters of Mercy apostolate on Joseph Avenue in Rochester. The Sisters minister mainly to the non-Catholic poor, and describe their mission as "simple presence among the poor, giving witness to a Christ who loves, and who moves among them."

During the past three years, their ministry has broadened but not changed basically since its inception in 1965.

It is carried forth by living in the area, by providing an after-school facility for neighborhood children and by visiting their homes to establish relationship with families.

"It includes neighboring with our Jewish friends also," the Sisters say.

"Sharing has always been a part of our efforts — with the poor and with those who need us, and with those who wish to find ways to help and to understand better, problems common in the central city. The future

may present new ways of sharing."

Any future "success", the Sisters feel, would depend on evangelization based on real love of the people, a knowledge of them and their culture, and the availability of styles of worship which the people could understand, and to which they would be able to respond.

At the Genesis Settlement House on Duke Street, the strengthening of family life has been the main purpose, through counseling of teenagers, activities for children, and work with adults. The staff is looking at the operation of the agency to see what changes need to be made, but still feels that people are the primary concern, and the meeting of their most urgent needs.

With the transitional aspects of the area at present, the workers at the settlement see themselves as "enablers", helping those they serve to be able to identify their own rights and to take measures to see that these rights are granted them.

Greatest changes have been in (Continued on Page 54A)

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