

NOW HEAR THIS ... No Reason Now for Neglecting Liturgy Improvements

By Father Richard Torney

A columnist may have no claims to expertise in subjects requiring special knowledge, but given a podium and a obligation to meet a deadline he is liable to venture in where even angels shudder.

Last week's effort here on varied attitudes toward parochial worship contained a modest hope that the arrival and form of new Eucharistic Prayers would help dissolve some of the "passivity and restlessness" among the laity waiting for liturgy to become more inspiring.

It turned out that several readers challenged me to be more specific. (See Letters to the Editor for a sample of intelligent response the column provoked.)

My words were that the "large, middle group of parishioners passively accept what their priests decide, while admitting that ... the whole worship experience is less inspiring than they had been led to hope by the reformers."

I never meant that they didn't

care, but that they weren't helping the cause of renewal by concealing their expectations that it was about time for their parish to produce higher quality ritual and music.

One writer's query was: "Couldn't the Courier-Journal continually print instructions from the liturgical experts and report suggestions from the progressive parishes on how to make Sunday Mass more meaningful to more people?"

Our answer is: Yes. The Courier Journal has regularly printed every directive from the Diocesan Liturgical Commission to our parish priests so that the laity may know how the clergy are being instructed. (eg. The second half of the current official instructions to pastors about the new Eucharistic Prayers is on page 6.)

We pledge to continue this service and that whenever we can obtain authoritative and helpful material on improving the performance or understanding of worship we shall present it prominently.

A series of reviews of what some of our parishes are accomplishing in

liturgical renewal is being prepared for print.

The late Atlanta Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan, whose untimely death last year silenced an eloquent and progressive voice on liturgical renewal, once wrote: "The great issue in today's pastoral worship is how best will God be praised in the accents of our society, how best will this vast, impatient ailing body be served?"

Hoping for a liturgical form to be developed in the U.S. which would have words and gestures familiar to the parishioners, Archbishop Hallinan believed that "the cries of the destitute and the deserted, merit an audience at God's altar just as much as the voices of the child, the sinner and the sufferer. It is the liturgist's work to make sure that all get heard." (Commonweal 10/13/67)

Even though the Atlanta prelate chided his fellow-bishops for their inertia ("old mentalities have worked against a living liturgy"), he deplored clandestine experimentation and disobedience to diocesan rubrics.

He believed with the Vatican Council that control of the liturgy belonged to local bishops and national episcopal conferences.

The Council stated those limits clearly: "Absolutely no other person, not even a priest may add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority."

But the American hierarchy and our own bishops in this diocese, cannot be blamed for parish worship which looks inept and sounds badly solely because the priests and people have not tried their best to work within the present possibilities and permitted limitations. Before welcoming more freedom why not stabilize and perfect what we have?

For five years we have known that singing participation by all the congregation has been set as a norm in renewal of worship (Vatican Council, Decree on Liturgy: "Liturgical action is given a more noble form when sacred rites are solemnized in song with the active participation of the people... Religious singing by the people is to be skillfully fostered".

No. 113, No. 118). But most parishes are a long way from wise selection and artistic rendition of music Sunday after Sunday. How few have advanced in quality of music or ease of song in five years?

Pastors and people know that good singing, by all the congregation, cannot be produced without skilled direction. So, paying professional fees and scheduling congregational practice are unavoidable steps toward this perfection.

Entrance processions and offertory processions or presentations are permitted. Properly executed they can involve the congregation dramatically just as good stage technique can elicit audience empathy in a theater. But how few parishes use these simple symbols?—Imagination—with lay planning—could transform the walking of a few people down the aisle into a learning and feeling experience for hundreds. And it could be varied from week to week all within official rubrics.

Different ways of presenting the Prayer of the Faithful, with lay

voices speaking the petitions, could catch the attention and involve the emotions of the congregation more deeply than unison recital of the Gloria or Credo. Why do we priests think that only we can best express the range of concerns our parishioners feel?

Many interpersonal dynamics in the liturgy will probably never be realized until the oversize church is replaced by the smaller parish or smaller Mass center. But where crowd size would permit standing around the altar or grouping where worshippers can look into faces instead of backs, the reality of the Mass as a community action is deepened.

Liturgy that is authentic must be impressive to man's spirit, have traditional roots as well as modern message, and speak to his emotions as well as his intellect.

It must involve the people in the back pews as well as the family which like to sit up front. It must bring the congregation a feeling that they have been in communication with each other as well as with The Father through action with Christ.

COMMENTARY

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CHURCH AND THE CITY

Fighton Day... A Celebration

By Father P. David Finks

On Jan. 28, 1969 the Black community of Rochester will celebrate FIGHTON DAY. A rousing, day-long holiday of parades, receptions, visiting dignitaries will announce the start of production of the Black-owned, Black-operated full-scale manufacturing firm in the United States.

This factory making metal stampings in a Sullivan Street building, with its first year payroll of 100 employees, is the type of "demonstration" the organized Black poor of Rochester are interested in. This is what it means "to have a piece of the action" in an industrial society.

FIGHTON DAY is an important watershed for the church in its growth in self understanding of its obligations to the poor. It was the Protestant churches through the Board for Urban Ministry of the Area Council of Churches who four years ago supplied the funds at the request of the Black ministers to help the FIGHT organization.

This success of the FIGHT leaders in developing a whole new spirit and options to poverty within Rochester's Black community demands rethinking of the church's traditional mode of service to poor people.

There are several tens of thousands seriously poor urban and rural people in the territory of the diocese of Rochester. The amount of money necessary for direct long-term subsidies to poor families would bankrupt the diocese within a very few months.

Even if there were these kinds of resources the amount of waste and re-duplication of services would be criminal.

The church must learn to use its resources strategically for the most part in order to help people over-

come the ravages of unjust poverty.

In the Rochester area, Catholic Family Center with the Community Chest has sponsored neighborhood social service teams of case workers and neighborhood aides. They are doing a very good job of helping families and individuals suffering from the varied effects of serious want.

This program in turn supplements the work of Monroe County Social Service, which within the limits of antiquated welfare laws, is one of the best administered public programs in the United States.

People of good will can help best not by hand-outs but by prodding the Community Chest and the members of the Council of Social Agencies to allocate more resources to the service of are-poor. Programs of voter education are needed to develop support for a uniform national welfare system and some form of basic annual income to overcome the degrading aspects of the welfare laws.

In the approach to rural poverty the strategy is somewhat different in those areas where initial direct service may be necessary because of a lack of private social and health care agencies and ineffective and understaffed public social service departments.

The rural apostolate of a small team of five diocesan priests headed by the capabilis Father John Hempel is using its miniscule financial resources to develop better community service in the rural counties of the diocese.

In urban areas the best strategy seems to help the churches organize ecumenically and pool resources to help people develop their own communities.

Needs must be identified with the help of the people affected. This very often will require making professional planning specialists available to a community. Available programs and organizations can then be encouraged to be responsive to these needs.

If there are areas of service not covered by existing structures, then people in an area are supported in their efforts to organize and pressure private and governmental agencies to get what is needed for the community.

In the urban housing crisis, as an example, the churches could provide seed money so that non-profit groups could hire an architect and begin during the long months that it takes to negotiate federal grants to pay for the project. The money is then returned to the churches for another project. A few thousand dollars can thus initiate a multi-million dollar housing development.

Also, housing experts and planners could be made available on a consultant basis to community groups to develop housing and urban renewal with the churches picking up the consultant fees.

The important thing is to broaden our concern for the poor from the casual hand-out or simple volunteer project. Churches must learn to use their limited resources to develop community participation in poor areas and then support these groups in gaining what they need. The biblical "cup of cold water" today includes proper health-care and social services and the economic development of poverty areas.

(Father Finks will be absent from this page for two weeks. His next column will appear on Jan. 31.)



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

These People Are for Real!

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Not many people are letter writers, but Christmas brings forth notes and letters which express loving concern for friends, for the Church, for the world. Here are a few excerpts which may edify you as much as they do me.

From an Air Force friend: "Our four year old twins are giving their old parents a run for their money. The little boy is mongoloid and the King of the household. They sure keep things from being dull."

From an engineer, a convert to the Church at the U. of Oklahoma, 16 years ago: "This has been an interesting year, especially with all the changes in the Church. Had some uneasy months but everything has worked out all right. Our parish has had some radical change this past year, some of which I agree with, and others I don't. But I have managed to survive the changes and hope that things will stable out soon..."

From an under-thirty high school teacher, a man: "Of all the years I have taught CCD classes, this year seems to be the most demanding, because of the multiplicity of changes in the Church. I consider myself neither a hawk nor a dove with respect to the ferment among the People of God, but a lamb with a conscience. I certainly feel the need to be led by one true shepherd in Rome, but at the same time recent develop-

ments have forced me to look more closely at what I believe and why. I do not think this mood of ambivalence is necessarily bad for me as an individual; but to a teacher of high school religion it poses problems. Frank Sheed's 'Is It the Same Church?' is a welcome contribution to my education."

From an about-30 elementary school teacher, female: "Our family is doing well and our kids are really something. Hey — you mentioned Sister Berchmans. Ask her if she's any relation to the Sr. Berchmans who used to teach at Mt. Mercy Academy, Buffalo. If the nuns really want to do something for the public they could stop confusing us by their name switching. I'll even bet her first name is Mary..."

From an elderly saint whose prayers I value more than most people's: "I miss your visits. You were always so good to the sick and to the old people."

And in the same mail from the same village came this gem: "We miss your big foot in your mouth." (If you think that's questionable, it is one of the nicest notes I received, really sincere with love and truth.)

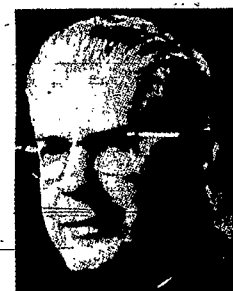
From a nephew in Viet Nam: "Right now I am at Con Thien on the buffer zone of DMZ. The newspapers make a bigger thing of V.N. than is actually happening. In fact it has

been relatively quiet for the last month and a half. I wasn't going to send out any Christmas cards; that's the wife's job. But I got seven of these so I'll send them to my family and one to you for all the uncles and aunts..." (Which is a reminder to all of us how important it is to write to the men in the Services.)

From the widow of an AF pilot whose marriage I witnessed 25 years ago in Alabama. (The husband was a convert and a man of exceptional goodness): "I'm teaching in the public school system. I miss St. Bart's but retirement, pay etc. forced me to leave. It's hard to realize that life can go on so uncomplicated (on the surface) for these many years since Frank died. I've needed his logical guiding hand so often as well as his love and ideals. But we're managing."

And finally from a priest-friend, chronologically over thirty, but very under-thirty in his theological and sociological compulsions (He sent a note with his gift, a rag doll): "Just a little reminder of the reminder you're always giving. May the revolution be as gentle as you hope for and as fast as I hope for!" And emboldened on the stomach of the rag doll were the words: "Keep Smiling."

To use an expression which pleases the fancy of those who feel fargon is an improvement on English: "These people are all for real, man; for real!"



VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

Worship and the Love of Life

By Father James T. McHugh

In the introductory statement to their pastoral the American Bishops indicated the theme on which they would invite further dialogue. The central focus of the pastoral is the dignity and value of human life, as set forth in the opening line: "We honor God when we reverence human life." The pastoral attempts to show the link between the worship of God and the love of life.

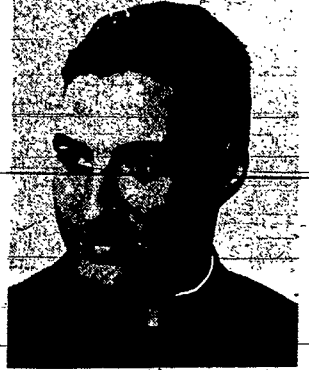
Undoubtedly the Bishops had in mind those deeper questions that trouble men's minds that were posed so clearly in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: "What is man? What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress?" On the more personal level an individual might well ask himself — What does the Church, or the state, or human society, or any other person care about me? What good are my efforts, my thoughts and dreams, my daily work? Basically, does anyone care?

The answer to these questions can be found in the Christian anthropology which characterized the teaching of Vatican II. Although the terminology may seem forbidding, the council tells us what man is in the familiar language of the "penny catechism. Man is created in the image of God," and therein lies the source of his dignity. Possessed of intellect and will, man is in charge of all creation.

He is called into existence by God that he may take dominion of the world, so that he may master all its secrets and its forces for the good of man, and so that ultimately, he may utilize the powers of the created world in pursuing his eternal destiny. In order to more closely associate himself with God his creator, man must respect and love all creation in a special way he must love life.

The recent trip of the American astronauts around the moon is a wonderful example of the driving determination that must spur man on

Father James T. McHugh, a priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, has served with the N.C.W.C. Family Life Bureau since 1965.



to unlock the secrets of God's creative plan and to discover again and again that he — man — is always at the center of it.

The pastoral then singles out that special human community that has most to do with life and with living — the family. It is here that the act of creation unfolds itself most dramatically in the birth of the child; it is also here that the most powerful of human forces — love — is constantly at work to insure each person his identity and his status.

This love is most wonderfully expressed by the spouses when they choose each other as partners for life. This love calls them to marriage which is "the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love." This marital community is the family — "the school of deeper humanity."

At this point the bishops focus on the recent encyclical of Pope Paul VI. The important dignity of human love and of the marital community as spelled out in Vatican II has been reaffirmed and strengthened by Humanae Vitae. The complete understanding of the inherent values requires a constant study and dialogue.

The bishops emphasize the positive values that are highlighted in the encyclical. They also reaffirm, with Pope Paul, an opposition to all methods of artificial contraception. At the same time, the Bishops recognize certain aspects of the pastoral situation that require a further word.

First of all, upholding the primary position of the magisterium in theological matters, the bishops also recognize that scholarly study may at times prompt the theologian to dissent from authentic non-infallible teaching.

Because of the interest in theological questions and the capacity of

the communications media to disseminate information quickly, the pastoral calls for a continuing dialogue between theologians and bishops so that in theological matters the teaching of the Church will be faithfully presented and that specific questions or scholarly dissent will not be confusing.

In regard to the conscientious decision of the individual couple, the bishops state that the teaching of the Church is a primary source of guidance. At the same time, for some couples there may be circumstances that make it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the ideal. Such circumstances may diminish moral guilt, and in some cases reduce it to zero, as Archbishop John J. Carberry of St. Louis observed.

In such cases, couples will re-examine their decisions, always open to the prodding of the Holy Spirit. Bishop John Wright noted that the individual conscience is not a teacher of doctrine, and individual decisions cannot be generalized. On the other hand, the reasoned dissent of some married couples is a different phenomenon and it poses serious questions for the teaching magisterium.

To sum up, the family is a twofold source of life. It is here that life begins, and it is here that living is learned. The primary responsibility of the Christian is to proclaim a joyful love for life, and to take command of all those natural forces that will make life more worth living.

The dominant theme of the pastoral then is the dignity of human life, which is clearly expressed in the words of the Old Testament: "I set before you life or death. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live in the love of Yahweh your God."

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