

Liturgical Commissions And Their Roles

It is a widely held theory that dissatisfaction with a situation becomes strongest when a solution to the problem is just around the corner.

Perhaps current attitudes toward the manner in which the Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated in the average parish fit into this category. Participation in the liturgy with its recent innovations has given laymen some slight sense of community, perhaps for the first time. It has also made them realize that a much more effective and meaningful celebration must be possible, and they are waiting for pastors to institute practices which will accomplish this end. Meanwhile, pastors in turn seem to be waiting for requests from their parishioners for broader participation in the liturgy.

At least two agencies on the local scene hope to bring to an end this "After you, Alphonse!" status for the liturgy.

One of these is the Liturgical Commission of the Diocese of Rochester and the other is the Liturgical Commission of the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen.

Both groups believe that the "Post-conciliar Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" has performed admirably its task of carrying out the intentions of Vatican II by providing for many innovations and options which have not yet become matters of general practice.

The problems are those of informing pastors and parishioners alike of the glorious potential now provided by the liturgy, and of encouraging the introduction of new forms and practices.

E. J. Curran of the RACL Board of Directors in discussing this question has suggested that if Catholics were fully aware of the depth and variety of the liturgical practices which are permitted and even recommended by the Church, there would be much less liturgical experimentation.

The diocesan commission, which has 10 members including a sister, a layman and a laywoman and is under the chairmanship of Msgr. William H. Shannon, chaplain of Nazareth College, has concerned itself pri-

marily with the task of updating the practices of the diocese with regard to liturgical matters. Pastors are informed of changes as their use is authorized by the "Conciliium" in Rome, and the commission assists in the liturgical training of priests by providing basic information as well as suggestions for homilies and for explanations in parish bulletins.

According to Msgr. Shannon, the commission also wishes to stimulate lay interest in the liturgy because "if liturgical formation does not accompany recent changes, the results will be tragic."

Work toward this formation constitutes the primary interest of the RACL commission which has Sister Theresa Peters of the Sisters of Mercy and Mrs. John Swift of Guardian Angels Parish as co-chairmen. The principal aim of this body is to accelerate, through education and participation, a renewal in the Eucharistic Liturgies as they are celebrated on Sundays.

It is of interest that in July 1968, the diocesan commission recommended the establishment of liturgy committees in each parish with a majority of lay members. A recent survey of 56 parishes in the metropolitan Rochester area by RACL showed that to date only 13 had followed this recommendation.

The RACL commission expects to function through a series of liturgical workshops for laymen. A parish committee would constitute an ideal group for this purpose. Laymen would receive information concerning the liturgy, including historical background and a review of the options which are available in liturgical practice. Later, specific liturgical readings would be discussed and a Mass celebrated.

The next general meeting of RACL will be conducted by the liturgical commission. It will consist of a detailed review of the plan outlined above and will conclude with the planning and celebration of a Mass. All Catholics interested in liturgical renewal are invited to the meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 27 at Sacred Heart Academy at 8 Prince St.

J. E. Koller
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

NOW HEAR THIS ... Hollywood Finds It Hard to Fill 'Shoes'

By Father Richard Torney

A book that is translated into 12 languages and finds an estimated 20 million readers in five years is a sure bet for Hollywood.

Such a huge audience-potential waiting to see what the movie-makers have done with a story they liked is profitably multiplied when the passing years make the trials of its central figure daily conversation at dinner tables, bars, and street-corners.

So the prime disappointment of *The Shoes of the Fisherman* is that the 1963 novel by Morris West which could have been a challenging ecclesiastical drama about a Pope of the future has become just a disjointed and pretentious entertainment.

It cries out for a sequel: the movie I'd like to see now is what happened after the last scene where Pope Kiril I took off the jeweled crown of the papacy because "Our Lord wore only a crown of thorns".

The new movie is filled with the magnificent pageantry of a Pope's election and coronation, marvelous photography of Rome, has moments of fictional diplomatic tension, Vatican politics and theological controversy, and even offers a distracting sex-triangle as a subplot.

But it misses the book's (and our time's) most intriguing question: What would happen to history if we had a Pope who would dare to drop the shackles of tradition and boldly bring the Church into confrontation with the crises of war, poverty, free-thought and Communism?

Set in "the near future", the film tells of the first Russian Pope — a simple, modest man of peasant wisdom — who moves into international politics to save the world from nuclear war.

Archbishop Kiril Lakota (Anthony Quinn) is released by the Russians after 20 years in Siberian labor camps because the Soviet Premier, facing war with the Chinese, wants someone in Rome who might be a peace-making go-between. At the Vatican, to his astonishment, the Archbishop is swiftly made a Cardinal and a few days later is dramatically elected to be the Pope.

Even before he is crowned with the papal tiara he secretly jets into Russia to be a peace maker between China and the Soviet Union. Later,

on his coronation day, facing masses of cheering people in the piazza of St. Peter's, he announces that because Chinese starvation is leading the world to war he will sell all the possessions of the Church to help the world's poor.

And there, right on the threshold of a crackling plot-line — the relevance of the wealthy, international Church to a world that needs love and leadership as much as food — the movie abruptly ends.

The producers give us miles of footage of colorful ceremonies in St. Peter's, scores of Cardinals in eye-watering scarlet, the travail of a sickly young theologian who writes books the Vatican won't let him publish and the emotional problems of an American TV commentator. But

much as these distractions delight the eye and the emotions they hurt the creative momentum and audacious imagination of the story.

It seems to be a case of jamming in a little bit of something for everyone. The romantic-interest of an extra marital affair and the anguish of a supposed rebel priest may have been injected to pander to the culture of our times. A humanized Pope who slips out of the Vatican to see how ordinary Romans live and an inside view of how the Church anguishes over "new" theology seem like sops thrown to the ecumenical movement.

Hollywood has never successfully understood the religious experience, whether it be a saint's biography or a Biblical incident or the profound

nature of a man's spiritual challenge like "Shoes". But this is probably excusable because an industry which must put its wares on the counter of the neighborhood box office has learned that the medium moves the customer more than the message.

"For all my regrets about this film's inadequacies I did enjoy the medium of realistic spectacle, contrived imagination and fictional personalities. And I found some message. "Shoes" is not a religious classic; it won't be heresy to say you didn't like it.

But you may be provoked, as I was, to think prayerfully of the loneliness and the power of the Vicar of Christ. May he who walks in the shoes of Peter the Fisherman bravely meet the crushing responsibilities toward the entire Family of God.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

When Not to Fashion an Opinion

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Dear Sister,

Thank you for your letter. However I must beg off expressing any personal opinion about what you term "the Community fashion show."

There was a joke circulating around during the end of Pius XII's pontificate. A Mother General had an audience with the Pope. He was proposing changes in the Nuns' habits. He said: "Reverend Mother, I think that your habits are too cumbersome, too long and too heavy. The head piece could be simpler, too. Why not change the habit so it will be simple and modest, yet symbolize the religious tradition of poverty, service, modesty and community?"

After the audience, Mother returned to the Motherhouse. Her Sisters flocked around her in excitement: "What did the Holy Father say?"

The Mother General squared her jaw and replied acidly: "What does a man know about women's clothing!"

Since discretion is reputed to be the better part of valor, I'm keeping out of "the fashion contest", as you call it. It's too charged with emotion among women for me to be involved. However, I can give you some of the reactions which I have heard:—

A female government worker: — "I had a visit from a college classmate who has been a Sister for 20 years. She had on a stunning dress

for a habit, and an attractive veil. I asked her if she thought her dress was more effective in her work. She replied: 'Oh, yes. The people do not regard me as some kind of rarified bird. Now they feel that I'm one of them. I can get closer to them.'"

A Catholic intellectual: — "One of the great things about the Renewal is the change of habits. Nuns consider the religious habit as a kind of fetish. Why should women be subject to a uniform when the Council stresses individuality. These women are just beginning to live!"

A railroad worker, on the occasion of a Legion of Mary dinner at the Sherwood Hotel in Hornell: — "Are some of these women Sisters, Father?" "Oh, yes. Just a few of them. They're experimenting with different religious habits." "When I went to schools our Nuns looked like Nuns."

"Oh, cheer up. Dedication is not in the habit. It's in the heart."

"Sometimes we need a reminder of that dedication, Father."

A thirtyish Protestant matron: "When Sisters get so interested in clothes I think they are losing something precious."

A married couple in Rochester: "We have gone to the Mercy Mission bazaar for years, and it has been wonderful. The Sisters were so bubbling with joy to be selling their articles to help the Missions, but this year it was different. None of

the little Sisters paid any attention to us. They and their friends were running around fashioning their various dresses for one another. Father, I think they're losing something."

From a cynical female collegian in the Midwest: "The rage among the Sisters is a clothing contest. It separates the 'haves' from the 'have nots.' Those who have families to supply them are decked out with many dresses."

A younger priest: "How can nuns express their individuality all wearing the same thing? Everything is in evolution. Let the dresses join the universal evolution. Religious Communities aren't dependent on externals like the habit, for their spirit. The answer is love and more love."

A fortyish priest: "Thank God those awful head pieces are gone and the skirts don't drag the dust any longer. But I wonder if there isn't a bit of vanity creeping into the souls of those Sisters sashaying around in their multiple habits."

So there you are. I suppose that Religious Communities will suffer more spiritual and community disintegration from dropping community prayer, community Eucharist, community recreation than from community dress.

Anyway, in any personal opinions I count me out! That's too expensive an area for a poor male to enter.



COMMENTARY

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CHURCH AND THE CITY

Sex Argument Waste of Energy

By Father P. David Finks

The sex education controversy developing within the diocesan school system does not seem to deserve such attention. If Sigmund Freud were alive, he might have some comments about people who react more quickly to sex education curriculum than to a total parochial school system in some danger of coming apart at the seams.

I would suspect a hard-core cadre of right wing activists pursuing a national policy of opposition to sex education in the various school systems. Some in this age of nuclear weaponry still suspect an international plot to destroy the capitalist countries from within through sexual perversion. This group, I believe, is somewhat a minority.

Other parents are probably more upset with the manner in which the new curriculum was introduced into the Catholic schools. Citizen participation through elected representatives responsible to their constituents is still a developing mode of operation within the Catholic church.

The tragedy of such an "overkill" controversy in a skittish Catholic community is that it drains off creative energy better devoted to developing new, viable forms for Catholic education.

The diocesan superintendent's staff and advisers are, I believe, working on several optional plans for the use of our educational resources. Parents and parish groups supporting this research and providing creative input would appear to be helpful at this point.

Because imaginative education is one of the prime components of a healthy community, Urban Ministry will support the diocesan Schools Office in its "future planning."

The Urban Ministry Council is considering developing a task force on urban Catholic education to work with members of the diocesan superintendent's staff. A small group of teaching sisters and lay people are already discussing the makeup of this proposed task force.

To encourage such "brainstorming" I offer some tentative ideas gleaned from various people:

- A pilot study of the inner city schools of Rochester by a professional educational research firm should be commissioned in the near future. This would provide the basis for a definite diocesan policy toward schools in parishes operating at a financial deficit. The closing of a

number of grades at Mount Carmel School is seen by many inner-city residents as a bleak sign of things to come.

- Research should be done in the whole field of pre-school education. Education experts here and abroad are encouraging the development of serious education of all children during the formative years from 2 to 6.

- The consolidation of inner-city schools into two or three semi-autonomous education centers with community elected school boards might be a reasonable experiment in community control. We have operated our elementary schools for years with a good deal of non-professional control of policy and programs.

No thinking person is seriously interested in doing away with the Catholic educational system. What is needed is professional planning and widespread support for new educational horizons.

A great tragedy would be that almost a century of church-sponsored education will erode into gradual bankruptcy while awaiting the "Godot" of federal aid which, I fear, under our present policy will never come.



ST. PAUL AND LENT

Baptism: Commitment to a New Life

By Peter Schineller, S.J.

(The author of the following article, the fifth in a series of seven Lenten meditations, has taught as a scholastic in New York City high schools, and currently is in second theology at Woodstock.)

"When we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death. We went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from death by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life."

—St. Paul's letter to the Romans, 6, 4-5.

One of the purposes of Lent, according to Vatican II, is to "recall baptism or prepare for it." The bishops desire that in addition to the renewal of the baptismal promises, adult converts be baptized at the Easter-Vigil liturgy. This was the custom in the early Church, and it served to bring out the rich meaning of baptism. I fear that we have lost this close relation of baptism to the

Easter mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection, and the apostle Paul can help to regain this perspective.

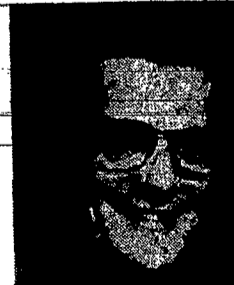
As he affirms in the Scripture above, baptism involves a dying to sin and selfishness in union with Christ's redemptive death, and as Christ rose to new life on Easter, we are united through the Spirit with his risen life. Thus Paul calls the baptized person a "new creation," united with Christ and Christians to form one body.

Paul also alludes to baptism as a washing with water, and reveals a deeper symbolic meaning of water. In baptism we are like the Israelites of the Old Testament, passing through the Red Sea. The waters meant death for the Pharaoh and his army, but new life for the Israelites, for the passage through the Sea meant liberation from slavery in Egypt, and progress to the Promised Land.

In the New Testament, the central redemptive act is Christ's passage from death to resurrection. By baptism, the Christian is united to Christ in this passage or Passover from death to new life.

Baptism does not consist only of something that happens to us. Rather it is a commitment to a new life of love. One commentator on Paul writes that "for Paul it is inconceivable that a man identified with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ in Baptism could ever again think of sin and evil." According to Paul, the baptized can no longer be thieves, drunkards, slanderers or swindlers, for in baptism "you have all put on Christ as a garment."

This is why part of the Easter Vigil liturgy is the renewal of the baptismal vows. The Christian promises, in union with the Risen Christ, to serve God faithfully and walk in the newness of life. He is bound, according to Vatican II, "to show forth by the example of his life, the new man which he put on at baptism."



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