

# The Communion Rite in Liturgical Reform

(Part One of a Series)  
By FR. CLIFFORD HOWELL, S.J.

The historical background of the ceremonies of distributing Holy Communion explain much of the reason for reform of this ritual. Father Howell is an expert in liturgy and has written widely on all phases of the liturgical renewal.

"In the liturgy the sanctification of man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs" (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 17). "In the restoration of the liturgy both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things that they signify. The Christian people, so far as is possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease" (ibid., 12).

These and several other passages in the Constitution all vindicate the contention of liturgists that liturgical celebrations must be as meaningful as possible. Not only must there be meaning in the words and actions but every effort should be made to ensure that this meaning reaches the people who are taking part.

The instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in May of 1967, stated: "It is not sufficient for the ministers to content themselves with the exact fulfillment of their role according to liturgical laws.

It is also necessary that they should so celebrate the liturgy that by this very fact they convey an awareness of the meaning of the sacred actions" (120).

Expressing the same thing colloquially one might say "they must put it across."

Now what is the meaning of holy communion? Is it adequately conveyed by our past and our present rites? By the way in which we celebrate them? Can we do anything more to "convey an awareness of the meaning" to our people?

These are some of the questions we shall try to consider in this article about reforms of the communion rite. Surely the meaning of communion is that priest and people, by eating together of the sacred victim they have just offered together, are thereby sharing in the sacrifice and are united to each other and to Christ their head. It is the meaning expounded to the Corinthians by St. Paul:

"The bread which we break, is not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). The real sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the Church. That is the "holy thing which is signified" by communion.

Yet, alas, there are a few circumstances that make it difficult for that meaning to be easily understood by the people. Let us examine some of them and see if we can do anything about them.

Mass as celebrated during the first few centuries had so many features in common with the Last Supper that nobody could take part in it without being reminded of that Supper. It was so obviously a sacred meal. There was an altar (table) behind which stood the celebrant (Christ); on it were put, in the sight of all, loaves of bread and a cup of wine; the priest did as Christ had done — he "took" them and "gave thanks" and "broke" the bread and "gave" to all.

The people could hardly fail to realize that they were all sharing a meal — that they ate and drank of the sacrifice because they ate and drank what they had seen placed upon the altar (offertory), consecrated (Eucharistic prayer), prepared for distribution (fraction), and distributed (communion). They could see and hear and understand everything. The meaning expressed by St. Paul came over clearly enough.

In the Mass as we had it until recently those things were hard to discern. The priest had his back to the people; they did not see bread brought to him, for he had, as it were, smuggled it on to the altar himself before Mass under the secrecy of a veil. They did not see him take it; they did not hear him give thanks and praise and say "This is my body given . . . my blood shed . . ."

He did not break it for distribution. He did not, in fact, distribute it — he distributed, instead, something else. For, when the prescribed moment had arrived, he opened a locked safe, brought forth from it what looked like a drinking cup, and from this he put into their mouths little objects that looked like paper discs.

No doubt they were aware that these discs had been, before consecration at some previous Mass, bits of unleavened bread. Even though food to be eaten is not normally served in a cup, but on a dish, they knew that these hosts were heavenly food. Some even realized that by receiving these upon their tongue they were sharing in the meal that they, with and through their priest, had just offered on the altar — and that in spite of the fact that the hosts had not been taken



from the altar but out of a tabernacle.

But it was not from the Mass itself that they knew this; it was from catechism or instruction or books they had read; it was not from the liturgy.

For the liturgy itself — the things they saw and heard — did not lead their minds to those truths. The things they saw and heard were such as to obscure those truths or even to lead their minds away

from those truths and imply falsehood.

For that which was implied (i.e. the lessons to be drawn from the sights and sounds) was that communion is not a sharing in the sacrifice but something on its own, inserted into the Mass as an interruption, to be received or not at will: "Communion is the transference of the Real Presence from the tabernacle to the individual; Mass is connected with it only as being the ritual by means of which the contents of the ciborium are periodically replenished."



Chalice for College Chapel

Bishop James E. Kearney, on behalf of Rochester Fourth Degree Assembly, Knights of Columbus, presents memorial chalice for St. John Fisher College Chapel to Father Joseph Trovato, CSB. Chalice is inscribed with names of all Fourth Degree members who died within past year.

## 'Wage School Tax' Proposed in Auburn

Auburn — State legislation "to put into effect an immediate wage school tax" which would "relieve property owners from the burden of being the sole support of public school education" was proposed here last week.

Francis J. Mastropietro, vice president of the Auburn Board of Education, asked the board to request State Sen. Theodore Day and Assemblyman George Michaels to introduce a bill to this effect.

Mastropietro made three other suggestions at the board meeting March 17. They were:

- Consolidation of purchasing departments of the seven school districts in Cayuga County, to include also the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), into one single office. This, he maintained, would save many thousands of dollars.

- Replacement of the office of Elementary Curriculum Coordinator by a group of all elementary school principals in all the county's school districts. He said this would save taxpayers "about \$15,000 annually" and "improve the academic p-h-a-s-e of our elementary schools."

### Church Lists Plans For Holy Week

Addition — Father Joseph T. Gaynor, pastor of St. Catherine's Church, has announced plans for the annual Holy Week Retreat devotions.

Retreat conferences will be given by Father Patrick MacDwyer of the Passionist Fathers. Masses are scheduled from Monday through Thursday at 7 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Discussion groups will meet in the parish center following evening services.

A folk Mass is slated at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 30.

to undertake similar moves. Mastropietro stated:

"Since some taxpayers carry a double tax burden by supporting both our public schools and their private schools, I wish to respectfully ask them to also look into the feasibility of implementing the above recommendations for possible use into their schools."

"The closing of any private school will mean only one thing to us taxpayers — higher school taxes — as the public school system will have to absorb these children."

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### WEEKLY CROSSWORD

ACROSS  
1. Skid  
5. Tibetan  
9. Large-headed  
10. Republic in the West Indies  
12. Falcon of sea  
13. Fuse  
14. Increase  
16. Rectic  
17. Wall and Bond for instance  
18. Perishes  
20. At-home  
21. Breach  
22. Fisherman's rod  
24. Water  
27. Shelter  
28. Four gills  
29. Consume  
30. Pronoun  
31. Acquire by labor  
33. Exclamation  
36. Egypt  
37. Pierced with holes  
39. All  
42. Yax  
43. Goddess of the moon  
44. Keeps  
45. Receptacles  
46. Foreboding

DOWN  
1. Walk pompously  
2. Respiratory organs  
3. The same: Latin  
4. Letter addendum  
5. Young hog  
6. Man's nickname  
7. Help  
8. Aseptic  
9. Caribbean and others  
10. Laundry room appliance  
13. Small cut  
15. Kind of cheese  
19. Biennial  
21. Movable barrier  
23. Cry of pain  
24. Pierced  
25. Huge  
26. Half an em  
27. Armet  
28. One of the Great Lakes  
32. Tapestry  
33. Appetizer  
34. The lady of Troy  
35. Poem  
38. Unit of measure  
40. Chinese pagoda  
41. Tavern  
44. Thus

ANSWER  
1. Skid  
2. Pompous  
3. Same  
4. Letter  
5. Piglet  
6. Nickname  
7. Help  
8. Aseptic  
9. Caribbean  
10. Laundry  
11. Appliance  
12. Falcon  
13. Small cut  
14. Increase  
15. Kind of cheese  
16. Rectic  
17. Wall and Bond  
18. Perishes  
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**VILLANOVA ALUMNI OFFICERS ELECTED**  
Area alumni of Villanova University have elected Herbert G. Lettau of Albemarle Street president. Other 1969 officers of the Villanova Club of Rochester are William G. McDonnell, Francis W. McNally and Alban J. Reichert, vice presidents; Bernard J. Cohan, secretary, and Robert E. Gores, treasurer. Donald Margraf is program chairman.

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EASTER GREETINGS

**Afri Ho of**  
This panel indic Uganda; left, U blessing after, O bikira nun gives  
(NC News Servi)  
When Pope Paul V to Uganda in July, h visiting a continent, once described as "homeland of Chris while there he will i ute to 22 black Afri byrs he "had the ble tune to canonize" in  
At Kampala, Uganc tal, he will preside at secretion of an altar i tuary now being co in honor of the mart were tortured and n supreme sacrifice f faith over 80 years  
At Namugongo, wh the 22 martyrs in death, a large, r church now stands in ful green field wh executioners' fire blazed.  
Every June Africa lles go there in pil by the thousands, to tural amphitheater b church, and as they Mass in the open t

**Bill Cos For TV**  
New York — (NC) Cosby has apologized viewers who were off his "Tonight Show" logue on his first vi Catholic Mass.  
Cosby, who is actin "Tonight Show" hos Johnny Carson's vacs ceived complaints al content of the comer  
Several cuts were the monologue and, a to one "Tonight spokesman, most o dealt with the word  
Cosby's monologu with an "outsider's" v Mass. Cosby's wife is olic and he was rel experience in going t with her. One commé made likened the "pizza without the sauce."

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