

The Communion Rite in Liturgical Reform

(Part 3 in a Series)
By FR. CLIFFORD HOWELL, S.J.

The historical background of distributing Holy Communion explains much of the reason for reform of this ritual. Father Howell is an expert in liturgy and has written widely on it.

To restore the significance and teach the lesson, what should be broken — publicly and manifestly broken — is the sacred bread destined to be shared by all, the one bread by which we are made one in Christ and one with each other.

"By insisting on the use of strange little wafers, unlike anything else we ever see or eat, we drive one more wedge between liturgy and life, fostering irrelevance between them. Tradition at its best is calling us ever more strongly to return to the use of real bread that is really broken, that really speaks to us, really showing us that it is really one bread that we are sharing. The fraction would then assume its integral place in the fourfold action of the Christian eucharistic tradition."

These words were spoken by Fr. James McGivern, C.M., in the course of his address to the National Liturgical Week held in Texas August 1968, and they evoked enthusiastic applause from an immense audience.

There is quite a large body of opinion and some very good arguments in favor of Fr. McGivern's plea for the use of ordinary bread. Until about the 9th century, leavened bread (called in contemporary documents *panis usitatus*) was used for Mass; it was bread that the housewives could bake in their own ovens and bring to church to be presented in the offertory procession. But when unleavened bread became the fashion it had to be made in monasteries and convents.

The offertory procession of gifts in Mass dropped out, and money offerings were introduced instead. I have consulted about ten books on liturgical history to find out why the change was made. All state the fact: most give the approximate date; but not one of them gave any reason. So what was the reason? In the Mass of the Future, Gerard Ellard, S.J., comments:

"Altar breads began to be made like coins, cut like coins, to bring out the direct relationship between the coin offered by the lay worshipper and the sacrificial gift prepared for transubstantiation. So a certain Bernard of Constance, writing in 1098, pas-

sonately inveighs on more than one occasion against the spreading novelty of altar breads, money, thin, money smooth, money round, in a word, wheaten money."

By the 12th century these separate small hosts were in use everywhere throughout the West, and the fraction, having then no practical purpose, survived only in its present vestigial form. If we returned to unleavened bread the money connotation would be eliminated, housewives could make altar breads, a meaningful offertory procession could be restored, a genuine fraction would be needed for functional reasons and — above all — holy communion would again be sub specie panis (for our present hosts look like paper rather than like bread).

The breaking of bread can be revitalized in a manner that I have witnessed in Switzerland, in Canada, in Germany and in France on particular occasions. The priest consecrated a large flat loaf of unleavened bread, some six inches by four and perhaps a quarter of an inch thick. It was made with criss-crossed grooves on it so that it could be broken easily for communion. He would consecrate one, two or more of these loaves according to the number of communicants expected; he broke them during the Agnus Dei, which, by origin, the chant to be sung during the breaking of bread.

Instead of a cuplike eucharist, there was a large paten — anything up to a foot in diameter, for safety it had an upturned rim. Thus, when the priest gave these particles to the communicants he was distributing what looked and tasted like food from a dish, instead of paper discs out of a cup; and the fact that the pieces had been publicly broken in the sight of all made the symbolism of the whole rite very striking. The lesson about sharing in the one bread was perfectly obvious to the communicants.

Clearly we cannot do this sort of thing at every Mass in every church; but it would be a good thing to do on special occasions when it is practicable, e.g., during retreats for small communities. The needed loaves could be made from wholemeal wheat and baked in the convent kitchen. In this way the present almost meaningless fraction would be restored to the importance it had when the Mass was called "The Breaking of Bread."

All this needs no official changes in the liturgy, for there are no laws about the color, size or shape of the

bread to be used at Mass. It is prescribed only that bread must be unleavened, and made from wheaten flour.

A further reform, which, however, would need new legislation, would be a change in the manner of distribution. The present way does not look like eating.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem describes, in his *Mystagogic Catecheses*, how communion used to be given in his day: "When you approach, do not go stretching out your hand or having your fingers spread out, but make the left hand into a throne for the right, and then cup your open hand and take the Body of Christ, saying, Amen." This, or some slight variant of it, was normal throughout the whole Church, East and West, for hundreds of years. According to Fr. Jungmann, giving communion into the mouth "dates substantially from the 9th century." Two more centuries passed before communion taken in the hand died out completely.

The desire for receiving communion in the hand rather than in the mouth is quite widespread: It has been expressed by writers in periodicals of many countries; it has been voiced at many Congresses, notably that of the lay apostolate in Rome last October, and that of the Asian missionaries in Manila five months earlier. Even in our own staid country it has been advocated. Return to the ancient practice is a reform that is bound to come some day, no matter how long it may be delayed by rear guard actions. It is in line with all the other contemporary strivings for genuineness and sincerity in liturgical worship that continue, one by one, to overcome opposition and gain official acceptance.

Family Rosary

The Family Rosary for Peace program is broadcast each evening at 7 p.m. by Rochester radio station WSAW, WMBF-FM in Auburn, television cable companies Channel 5 in Hornell, Channel 6 in Elmira and 88.75 mc. in Corning. Those who will lead in recitation of the Rosary this week are:

April 11—George Nandry of Holy Rosary.

April 12—Mass will be celebrated.

April 13—Joseph Skelly of Saint Ann's, accompanied by K of C Council 278.

April 14—John Dynarski of Saint Joseph's, accompanied by the Holy Name Society.

April 15—Edgar Bretz of Saint Cecilia's.



Mr. and Mrs. William Lehon (seated left) and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Freitas discuss plans for buffet luncheon for husbands during Nazareth College Alumnae Association homecoming program April 26.

European Tour Planned

A three-week spring holiday tour of Europe by air will be directed by Father Joseph Gorman, assistant pastor of St. Michael's, Lyons.

The tour will depart by transatlantic jet on May 7 to visit Ireland, France, England, Italy, Spain, and Portugal.

On the itinerary are the Shrine at Lourdes, the Vatican, the Basilica of Sacre Coeur in Paris, Fatima and other places of both religious and secular interest.

Party to Benefit Retreat House

The annual card party for the benefit of the Cenacle Retreat House, 693 East Ave., is scheduled there at 8 p.m. Monday, April 28.

Sponsored by the Women's Retreat League, the party is a once-a-year fund-raising endeavor.

Mrs. William Kramer and Miss Rosaline Nesser, committee co-chairmen, announced that persons unable to attend on April 28 could cooperate by having card parties in their homes. Included among committee leaders are:

Miss Mary Whitish, honorary chairman; the Mesdames Roy Jones, James Keenan, Eugene Fuent, David Lakeberg; the Misses Geraldine Moylan, Laura Hoheney, Helen Durnin, Marguerite Colgan, Mary Brydges, Jean Flanagan, Jean Schaffer, Norma Dentinger, Mary DiGandia.

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Nazareth College Homecoming Set

Peter Barry, former mayor of Rochester and a member of the board of regents of Nazareth College, will be principal speaker at the annual Nazareth College Alumnae Association homecoming Saturday, April 26.

The day's program will begin with a Folk Mass at 11:30 a.m., to be followed by a luncheon, reception and dinner.

Mrs. Margaret Scott is honorary chairman of the program, with Mrs. Virginia Hussey as advisory chairman. Committee leaders include the Mesdames Bernadette Stoffel, Helen Dailor, Mary Ellen Hasselwander, Carol Conway, Mildred Butler, Lois Elliott, Karen Harris, Dolores Hoffmann, Anne Ryan and Anne Freitas.

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'Sing-Out' Groups Scheduled Here

Two teenage "Sing-Out" groups will be entertaining Rochesterians this weekend.

The first, "Sing Out '69" is a gathering of over 100 East Rochester teens who perform for "love", tonight, April 11 at the Nazareth College Arts Center.

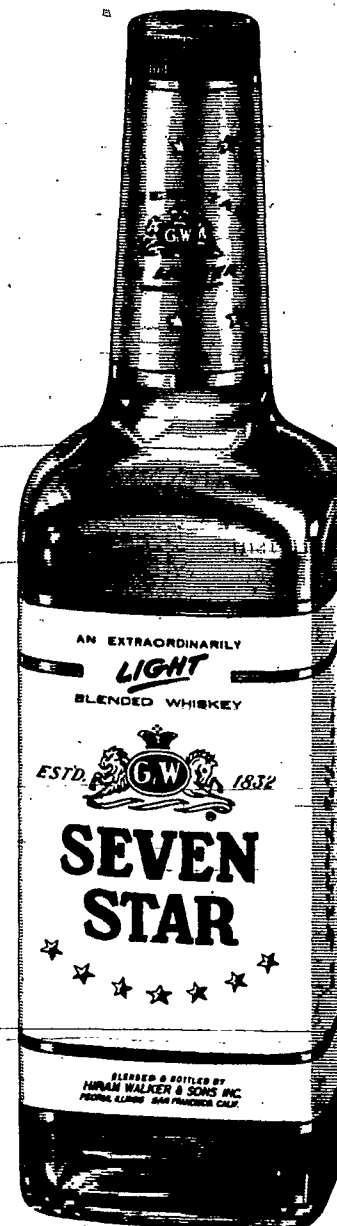
Their program, produced by Father Terrance Fleming, assistant pastor of St. Jerome's Church, will be for the benefit

of the Martin-DePorres Center. The second, "Sing-Out People on the Move", is a group of teens under the general banner of the "Up-with People" movement. They will perform tomorrow, April 12 in Midtown Plaza at 1:15 p.m. and again at the new R.I.T. gymnasium at 8 p.m.

The purpose of the second group is to involve people in the "Up with People" movement, and to provide good entertainment.

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CCD Laymen

An estimated 100 teachers, from every Diocese, are gathered here at Our Mercy High School April 26, to participate in the second annual Laymen's Conference, sponsored by the Diocese of Rochester.

The day will be addressed from two known religious educators, Mary Reed Newland and James DiGiacomo, a score of workshops and discussions.

Mrs. Newland came here as an innovator in the use of several innovative books, among them: "Christians, We and Dren and The Family Bible."

She has illustrated the religion department, as well as frequently in the periodicals. Her been translated into English.

Father DiGiacomo the religion department, as well as frequently in the periodicals. Her been translated into English.

The CCD office is it has asked for classes for the day, innumerable of attend the program.

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By SISTER GE and RITA DeV

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