

A Short History of the Communion Rite

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were tried in an attempt to lessen the danger.

In Rome, at least since the seventh century, a small amount of the precious blood was poured into a chalice containing wine that had not been consecrated. The few drops of consecrated wine were considered to "sanctify" the whole cup, and it was this mixture that the laity drank.

Another local custom at Rome was that the faithful were not permitted to drink directly from the chalice; they had to drink through a tube or reed. At a solemn Mass, a number of these were used; some were made of gold, others of silver.

Another safety measure that was at least considered was the practice of intinction. But this did not become popular in the West, and was firmly ruled out by the IV Synod of Braga in 675.

E. Theological Reflections.

My first reaction in studying all this material was amazement at the wide diversity of liturgical practice. There was a tremendous variation both from century to century and from place to place. And perhaps our first impulse is to seek to explain how this could be.

We can begin by pointing out that communications were not always the most favorable to the rapid exchange of ideas, especially after the fall of Rome, and travel was not that common. So it was possible for different practices to develop in different places. And if

Movie and Stage Nudity Seen as Passing Fashion

By ETHEL GINTOFT

Racine, Wis.—(NC) — Sister Honor Murphy, O.P., president of the National Catholic Theatre Arts Conference for artists, teachers and students, said there are signs of change in movies and plays away from "skin" scenes.

The nun, associate professor of speech and drama at Dominican College here, said the "skin things" had to be done. They were a "symbolic peeling off of all the externals to get to the person, a search for personal meaning, especially by the young. Like the nude scene in 'Hair'—it was a very natural unpeeling to find out what life was all about," she said.

"And then there is just simply a limit to the amount of the externals of sex you can explore. No one can determine the internal experience of sexuality. We've gone through it. Whatever nudity comes on film or stage now will have to be part of a bigger artistic statement," she asserted.

She said she didn't like "Hair" because: "I felt it was noisy, surfer, brash—a show for the young for whom the most surface things are closest. 'Hair' spoke in the idiom of the young—segments."

The nun explained that in the young of today the synthesis of segments happens within them. "For us, (older persons), the synthesis happens outside. The young can take it all in, slurp-wise. Life is 5-D for them right away. They have this total sense of absorption because life has been coming at them all at once as a result of mixed media."

She explained this is why young can come to grips with things faster but cautioned it is also why "they can be thrown more easily" when they are victims of divisive forces (conflict in home, etc.).

"They have to find support somewhere. They have to have that someone there: Parents, teacher, the church. If no one's there, they might have trouble

we know anything about the general mentality of Eastern as distinct from Western culture, we will recall that Easterners are inclined toward mysticism, while Westerners are much more matter-of-fact. Naturally, different cultures would express themselves in different liturgies.

If we look at the time factor, we recall that these first centuries were a period of rapid theological development, so that a certain amount of liturgical change could be expected for

'General practice was to place the host in the hands.'

that reason as well. In particular, we know that the first Christians handled the Eucharist with a certain familiarity—because they considered it as food offered by Jesus as a sign of his love.

But later on the divine character of this bread and wine began to be emphasized; it must be handled with extreme care and respect—or better yet, not handled at all. This consideration would obviously affect the manner of receiving Communion as time progressed.

Other reasons for variety would be different political and social circumstances. The Roman Empire first persecuted Christianity, then recognized it, and finally accepted it. Then Rome fell and left a vacuum of power that the Church stepped in to fill. Barbarians invaded and then were converted and

copied. In other words, they say, 'Let me find out for myself, but please be there.' They want their parents to worry about them and check on them but trust them."

A native of Chicago, Sister Honor joined the Dominicans here after high school and did undergraduate work in speech and drama at Marquette University. She has also done post-graduate work at Denver University, University of Wisconsin, and has certification from the radio and television summer course of New York University. She has taught drama for six summers at Catholic University.

From her experience, study and professional contact, she has some enthusiastic ideas as to what art in film or movies should do. Asked why in recent years there has been such a saturation of films on homosexuality or perversions, she said: "There are areas the artist honestly has to explore if he is going to search for man in his personal agonies, in his loneliness, in the totality of his human being-ness and the fragmentation of that same human being-ness."

"Whenever an artist gives one an honest exploration of so-called deviation, I can experience a great compassion. He must make a statement about this fragmentation of society."

"In movies like 'Easy Rider' and 'Midnight Cowboy' you begin to see the artist is commenting on what he sees in humanity. He crystallizes this for us: the loneliness, or homosexuality, or whatever and says to us, 'Here is a segment of the human family which we did not know about and have perhaps deprived of community.'"

Sister Honor said if she were teaching high school religion classes she would do it all—at least initially—through film because "even if I never even mentioned God . . . this would 'set them up' for the need for Him and then we'd be ready for theology."

had to be assimilated.

Theological circumstances also varied according to time and place as the Church faced certain heresies and reacted to abuses within her fold. All these variable elements would bring forth variations in the liturgy.

But still I wonder if we do not begin with the wrong question when we ask, "Why the differences?" Because that question presumes that ordinarily, if people are left alone,

they will worship in a uniform way.

And I think that that presumption should be questioned. If no two persons are the same, it follows that no two congregations are the same. And if no two congregations are the same, why should they be expected to act (for example, worship) in the same way? Agere sequitur esse.

Therefore the presumption should be that liturgical practices would vary according to time and place.

This fundamental human principle was recognized by Vatican Council II in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The Council decided that those elements of the liturgy which are subject to change "not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it."

Later on the Council decreed, "Provisions shall also be made . . . for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples . . . provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is pre-


served."

Perhaps God is better glorified not by perfect uniformity,


but by wonderful diversity,

since that is the way He made us.


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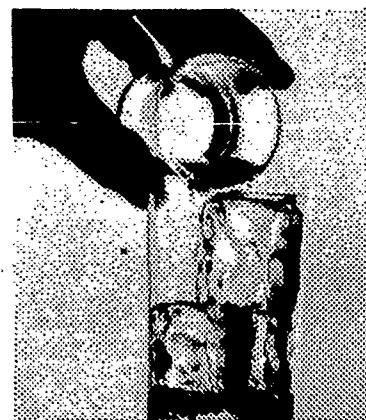


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