

Now Hear This

Laity and the Liturgy

By Alex McDonald

Some of the laity are already saying: "The changes in Sunday Mass seem so minor, now that we're putting them into practice, you wonder why we had all those weeks of preparation. What significant improvement will survive when the novelty is gone?"

A quick answer is that the enlargement of the Scripture readings — an Old Testament one weekly plus fresh selections from the epistles and gospels in a three-year cycle—is potentially the most influential gain the worshippers have acquired. And the numerous options now allowed in certain parts of the Mass offer a variety of settings to change the previous over-and-over monotony of our worship.

Most laymen appreciatively note that the opening ceremony involves them more than the prayers-at-the-foot-of-the-altar used to and that the departure of all the Latin has removed some verbosity from the ritual.

But it's quite clear, as expert liturgist Father Gerard S. Sloan from Catholic University says in the March 27 COMMONWEAL, "The quality of the clergy's attitude and educational and musical expertise is undoubtedly the chief factor in the people's satisfaction or lack of it with forms of public prayer."

As he puts it, unless the celebrating priest tries to improve the whole quality of his liturgical leadership nothing noteworthy and lasting can be hoped for.

But, be honest, the priest in his own role is not obliged to make up for what the laity will not bring to the Eucharist.

In the past as long as the priest said the right words and used the right materials the Eucharist was complete. What was important was that the rites be strictly performed: whether the priest muttered or hurried or paid any attention to the congregation had no more to do with the objective value of the Holy Sacrifice than whether the laity knew what he was saying or what the rituals all meant.

In that era the personal dimension of both priest and layman was neglected. As Benedictine Father Killian McDonnell put it: "Implicit in this unabashed objectivism was the assumption that in every sanctifying moment it is the Lord's act that is decisive."

But today the liturgical forms must move people interiorly or they are rejected. Our contemporary culture is so subjective-oriented that many of the laity, youth especially, wants some kind of "peak experience" from every exposure to worship.

If "good liturgy" is that which "speaks" to its age and to the people who participate in it, then music, light, appropriate leadership by the priest, physical relationship to other participants and to the altar must be carefully planned by the celebrant and the parish liturgical committee.

Those who object to a given liturgical celebration because it does not "move" them may have some valid objections to the

form and the style used in their parish. On the other hand it may be that the parish liturgy is close to the ideal and still leaves some unmoved. Can you ever really please everyone?

The layman who criticizes his parish priest for not being "charismatic" or "moving" when he celebrates the Eucharist and blames the style of the liturgy for failure to excite the spirit of the congregation is grossly unfair.

The purpose of the liturgical reform is to persuade parishes to give up their bad techniques. It begs the clergy to consider the subjective nature of the parishioners who must be touched by the most suitable form. But the renewal depends on the worshipper to as vital a degree as it does on the celebrant and the ritual.

Only those who come with pre-conditions for worship: an open presence, a bit of hunger for contact with neighbor and with God, a kind of interior sharpness, a willingness to be led congregationally, will experience any joy in the liturgical celebration.

The prayer attitudes the layman brings to church will be the measure of the values he takes away. The liturgical form of the "new Mass" was carefully designed to help reach out to God but it was never intended to endow each person at the Mass entrance hymn with the full pre-conditions to prayer.

**April 8
In History**

1920

The U.S. bishops announced the establishment of a Department of Social Action, to further the religious, educational and social well-being of Catholics. . . . Grave concern was voiced over the presence of five Socialists in the New York State Assembly; and other assemblymen were considering expelling them. The basketball team from the old Cathedral High School trounced Southampton High 37-20; and the pew rent was due at St. Andrew's Church.

1945

One month before the founding of the United Nations, the Vatican urged Germany to accept surrender. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen predicted that Russia would one day come to Christ; and a new \$25,000 rectory was in the works for Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish. Twenty-eight diocesan priests were given new assignments on the day Gregory Peck flashed his smile in "Keys of the Kingdom" at the Riviera.

1960

The lead story this week began: "South Africa's whites face annihilation at the hands of their black victims, Archbishop Denis Hurley warned this week. He said 'the white man's unbearable arrogance' has lashed the Negroes to a disorganized but disastrous revolt." The production of cigarettes in the U.S. reached the half-trillion mark in 1959, according to the Department of Agriculture; and Andy Boyd and Tony Ventura retained their fistic titles in the Aquinas Mission Bouts.

On The Right Side

**Father Guy,
Priest**

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Father John A. Guy died March 25 in Mercy Hospital, Auburn. He was 73 years old. Excepting for short service in St. Mary's parish, Rochester, and ten years at St. Stephen's, Geneva, most of his ministry was in Cayuga County where he was pastor for 30 years of the parishes of Montezuma and Port Byron.

He was little known by the people of Rochester and Monroe County, or Elmira and the Southern Tier. He was well known by most of the seasoned priests of the diocese, and by many Sisters. We who knew him well admired his scholarship, his piety, his priestly devotion. And all who knew him, remember him with a smile.

When Father Guy first came to his pastorate in Cayuga County, I was a fresh assistant to Father Curtin in Clyde, 15 miles away. Since we were neighbors I stopped in to welcome him. He seemed so venerable and I so young and diffident. I racked my brains to find something to open the conversation. In my innocence I remarked: "I said Mass in Lyons for Father Dissett this morning. The Mass wine was strange. It tasted like choke cherries."

Whether he was pulling my leg or was serious, to this day

I do not know. But he shot back tartly: "The Mass is neither the time nor the place to be sating one's passions" I was greatly embarrassed, and made a quick departure. But I have regaled our mutual friends, and himself, many times with this first meeting; and have enjoyed the incisiveness of his retort with every telling.

Yet for all the humor in the remark, I think there lies the key to understanding the mind and life of Father Guy. He was first and always, THE PRIEST. He loved the Mass. He revered the priesthood.

A year ago I heard a lecture in Canandaigua. The speaker spoke of the priesthood, and "the agony of self-understanding, and the general malaise suffered by many priests which have caused their departure to serve God and man in other fields."

To such an idea I think Father Guy would have reacted: "Why a man would depart the superlative service of God and man in the priesthood to a mild comparative in other fields, I wouldn't know." He frequently inflected that expression "I wouldn't know" to indicate "and no one else does, either."

To him and to most of us who are priests, the service of God and man radiates from the Mass. There Christ continues to offer Himself mystically in the Eucharist, uniting the congregation and the whole Church in the unity of intercession, adoration and service to the Eternal Father.

The Priesthood is not a man-made office. It is an invention of God. "Every high priest is taken from among men and ordained for men in the things that pertain to God." (Heb. 5:1) The priest is certainly a man among men. But he is a man set apart so that he may faithfully embody the presence of Christ among men.

Concerned about suffering, sorrow, poverty, loneliness of people, the compassionate priest embodies the compassionate Christ. He is concerned about the wrongs and the discordances that need attention now. That is why, for example, the priesthood rises up in vocal horror against the proposed legalized killing of unborn children as a terrible now wrong!

Vatican II reminds the world that the priest is the man of God. "The purpose which the priests pursue in their ministry and by their life is the Glory of God, the Father, in Christ. . . . That glory consists in this: that in performing the works of the ministry for men, they devote all this energy to increase of the glory of God and man's purpose in the divine life. . . ." Hence St. Paul writes: "People must think of us as servants of Christ, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. 4:1)

The theologian Karl Rahner wrote to priests: "Strike out boldly along new paths in pastoral zeal. But if the paths do not lead in the end to the altar of Christ, to prayer, to the confessional and to final salvation, they are not the paths of Christ, the Good Shepherd, leading to life."

Every path of Father Guy began at the altar and ended there. May he rest in peace.

**The Morriss Plan
Cogley Article
Not Factual**

By Frank Morriss



If articles like that of John Cogley (Life, March 20) contained more than a sample of truth and less than a wash bucket of fiction they wouldn't appear in the popular magazines. In regards to the Catholic Church, it takes that large dose of fantasy to excite most people into reading about it. Historians will be interested in today's siege of the Catholic Church by error, even when that siege proves unsuccessful as past ones have. But the citizens can be aroused into spending 50 cents only if they can be convinced that a mammoth and fatal catastrophe faces the haughty and hitherto invincible Church of Rome.

There are always persons like Cogley clever enough to try to make the sample serve for the full meal. The smidgen of fact he deals in is the truth that there is trouble, dissension, and desertion in the Church today. He uses this truth as a springboard for his grand leap into the fiction that Pope Paul VI is confused, hesitant ineffective — almost a minority of one, deserted by the majority and held in contempt even by those closest to him. "Paul, poor fellow, has no friends," serves as the title for the Cogley article, quite reminiscent of Stalin (or was it Lenin) who contemptuously asked, "How many legions has the Pope?"

Both Cogley and the dictator were wrong—Cogley even more palpably so when he adds, quoting a "sympathetic priest in Rome who has known Paul for 40 years," that "Paul . . . at least has no solid constituency."

You won't catch Life or any similar magazine providing the footnote that completely rebuts that contention — for as I say, how many among the citizens would put out half-a-dollar to read about a major defeat of the rebel faction in the Catholic Church, a defeat that showed that the rebels may have control of certain communications media but they do not, thank goodness, have control of the Church.

I am referring to the confrontation over celibacy — an event that showed Paul to be neither hesitant nor confused. Now in the looking-glass world of Cogley, the outcome certainly should have been that "Paul, poor fellow" would have found himself standing forlornly with a few other diehards on an untenable spit of sand as the tide of insistent change and popular clamor demanded an end to celibacy and the flight of free priestly desire to the fields of marital fulfillment.

Cogley, of course, in saying that "the Pope looks more and more like a defeated man," is operating on the hope that the wish will be father to the fact. But had he been interested in presenting evidence that shows the Pope far from being defeated, he would have cited the unanimous and strong endorsement of the Holy Father's teaching at the conclusion of the recent Synod of Bishops. This endorsement not only approved what the Pope has taught in the past but encouraged him to go right on doing as he has done.

Of course, it is *Humanae Vitae* that sticks in the craw of

Cogley and those like him, a fact he betrays when he lumps birth control along with celibacy as the major issues, a most unscholarly marriage of issues, incidentally. The image of Paul VI as indecisive, unsure, addicted to "debilitating distinctions" is really the way these critics would prefer him, if they cannot have him firmly and decisively on their side. And of course they can't.

Humanae Vitae was firm, decisive, definite, weakened by no distinctions, confused by no involved rhetoric or sophistry. It was an exact statement of Church teaching, calling for no compromise on a major point of human activity. Now if it is firm decision making that those like Cogley really feel would be a service to the Church in her present troubles, as the Life article claims, why have those like Cogley rejected it? Why do they reject Paul when he proclaims a teaching, and later fault him for indecision? The answer is clear: Since he will not teach exactly as they like, they must pretend he is barely teaching at all. Since he will not lead to where they want to go, they must present him as leading nowhere.

As for the other bit of Life fantasizing regarding an ex-nun who stopped going to daily Mass because "there wasn't anything there," why does not Life equally feature the true heroes who believe that Christ would not call them to a life that is irrelevant, much less degrading. Again the answer is clear: real heroes and the full truth won't sell.