

Women in the Liturgy



A woman's place? The new feminine revolution has begun. It is visible and highly audible. But the real work of the revolution will be quieter and more enduring. It will change our lives and our institutions. (NC Photograph by Christie McGue).

By FATHER JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

The Washington Post's editorial section for a Sunday in January carried this headline: "Prospects for the Decade: Women in Revolt." The story's concluding paragraph summarized the present status and future prospects of that movement for feminine equality.

"The new feminine revolution has begun. It is visible — and highly audible — in ex-

tremist statements by extremist groups. The real work of the revolution will be quieter and more enduring. It will change our lives and our institutions in ways that will be more and more evident as the new decade grows."

Both silent and vocal aspects of this revolution have already hit the Catholic Church.

After the Vatican refused to accredit a West German woman diplomat, the president of one

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feminist group in the United States angrily expressed "astonishment, incomprehension, and dismay" that authorities in Rome could act in such cavalier fashion at the very time when a Protestant African woman heads the U.N. General Assembly and an Anglican American woman presides over the National Council of Churches.

In a quieter vein, however, significant changes involving women in worship are already beginning to appear. The New York Times reported (February 23) designation of two women as "extraordinary ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion" at small parishes in Eagle Grove and New Vienna, Iowa.

Last November the American bishops approved, according to Article 66 of the Roman Missal's General Instruction, use of "a woman to proclaim the readings prior to the gospel, while standing outside the sanctuary." I grant some hedging exists here and the restriction, "when a qualified man is not available," does seem to imply the practice is in fact desirable only as an emergency measure.

Some technical, legal questions require clarification. What interpretation do we give the phrase, "outside the sanctuary?" A liberal one. As least comparison with the March 1967 decree and commentary on the place of women choir members in the sanctuary leads us to conclude that female readers and leaders may stand in the sanctuary (sanctuarium) as long as they do not remain in the area immediately about the altar in which the celebrating clergy function (presbyterium).

Tomorrow's liturgy probably will set women in other roles, too. Commentators, leaders of song, instrumentalists in the folk combo, organists and music directors, choir members, ushers (usherettes?), dancers.

KNOW YOUR FAITH

Q. and A.

By FR. RICHARD P. McBRIEN

Q. Is there any new thinking regarding the resurrection of Our Lord? What has changed over the years about the Church's teaching in this matter?

A. There was a time in Catholic theology and in catechetics when the resurrection of Jesus was not generally regarded as an essential part of the Redemption. According to the prevailing opinion, the full saving act took place on the cross; the resurrection was a kind of epilogue. Jesus rose from the dead in order to prove that he was truly the Son of God. (For a fuller description of this view, see Avery Dulles, S. J., *Apologetics and the Biblical Christ*, Newman Press, 1963 Chapter IV.)

Contemporary theology sees the Redemption in much wider terms. It includes not only the crucifixion but also the resurrection, the ascension, and the exaltation of Christ at the right hand of the Father, and, indeed, even the sending of the Holy Spirit. The whole series of events is called the Paschal Mystery. The Easter, or Paschal, season commemorates all of them.

Since the Redemption is the work of the Father, it is not surprising that it is the Father who raised Jesus from the dead for our salvation (Rom 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; 13:4; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20; Phil 2:9; I Thes 1:10; 1 Pet 1:21). This is the consistent tradition of Pauline theology, and it is endorsed by the Second Vatican Council (see, for example the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church n.7, and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n.10 and 22).

This understanding of the resurrection (as the work of the Father) has not always been a part of our catechetical formation. This may explain the emotional distress manifested by some Catholics when they learned that the new translations of the Gospels spoke of Jesus being "raised" from the dead rather than "rising" by his own divine power.

We are, in fact, saved by the resurrection of Jesus. It is through his resurrection that he communicates the new life of the Spirit to us (Rom 4:24-5). We are reborn in the Spirit because Jesus has been raised and glorified (Jn 7:39; 16:7; 20:22; 1 Pet 1:3-4). Death no longer has a final hold over any one of us. The hope of our own resurrection is founded on our faith in Christ's (1 Cor 15).

But if the resurrection is torn from the mystery of our Redemption and is regarded solely as a proof for the divinity of Jesus, then it can have no real meaning for the life and mission of the Church.

On the contrary, we must see that the resurrection is at the very heart of our Christian faith ("Jesus is Lord"). We Christians believe that human life and history can and will succeed because Jesus of Nazareth is the Risen Lord. The resurrection is the ultimate promise of God that his Kingdom will be brought to perfection for us. The God that promises us eternal life has already given new life to his only-begotten Son.

Jesus has left the tomb now and has gone into the city. He can and must be found there. It is the Church's responsibility to locate him again and again, and to release the spirit which he possesses. The Church is his resurrection community and, as such, a symbol of hope to the world. This is the essence of the Easter message and the task of Easter faith.

Love Triumphant

By REV. MR. PETER SCHINELLER

"I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nothing that exists, no created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8, 38-39).

To look at the resurrection of Christ from the viewpoint of love may shed some light on this mystery. As we saw last week, Christ's death came about because he dared to proclaim the good news of God's love to the poor, the captives and the oppressed. His call to love was rejected, and he was crucified and died.

But this is not the final word. For in the Easter mystery of the resurrection of Christ, we see that God's love is stronger than man's sin. While men might reject love and life, the God who is love again manifests this love in raising Christ from death, as the apostle Paul proclaims.

Rather than being separated from God by his death, Christ's death is overcome by the triumphant love of God. His death becomes the passover, the way to his glorification and union with the Father.

The Christian today shares in this love of the Father. Thus we read in the first epistle of John: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3, 14). The resurrection therefore plays an important part in the Christian life today, for it assures us that beyond the forces of death, the reject-

ed love, the sufferings we will face in our attempt to love God and neighbor, beyond these, as Paul proclaims, is the love of God.

With this love, supporting him and motivating him, Paul could endure imprisonment, suffering, and even death. With the freedom that this love brings, Christians today should be leaders in the struggle for peace and justice rather than war and oppression.

A Nobel prize scientist recently said that "American society is death-oriented. If you watch and read the newspapers, a great part of it is taken up by war, killing, murder, atomic bombs, defoliants, and we have war. All our ideas are death-oriented." While belief in the resurrection should not become a refuge for the Christian, it can serve to give him the power and freedom to work for the eradication of the death forces in our American society.

Faith in the power of the resurrection also has its effects on the Christian family. The love and sacrifices that are part of every family become surrounded by the love of God.

While much of the meaning of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ can be understood only in terms of love, the result of this love becomes the peace and joy of the Christian. Christ's first words to the disciples after the resurrection were "Peace be to you." This peace is not a naive feeling of joy in ignorance of the suffering and death forces that surround us, but rather the conviction that nothing can separ-

ate us from God's love.

Only our own selfishness and lack of love will prevent us from receiving that peace and joy which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. For as the apostle Paul writes, "since God did not spare his own son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give" (Romans, 8, 32).

COMPASSION

but if somehow you could pack up your sorrows and give them all to me, you would lose them I know how to use them, give them all to me.