

Leisure Time... Our Programmed Children

By DOLORES CURRAN

On April 1, our 8-year-old Beth brought home a Brownie Day Camp application. For two solid weeks in June, the accompanying brochure told us, the bus would pick her up at our local school, deposit her at the park for a day of planned activities and return her to school at 4 p.m.—all for a nominal fee.

Two weeks later, she toted home a summer school bulletin beginning, "Let your child put his leisure time to good use," and continuing with a detailed list of classes and times.

After that we heard from the local recreation department on a planned leisure time program, the library on a vacation reading program, the parish on a summer religion school and a local children's little theatre group.

Since these invitations to organized leisure time keep arriving, we're wondering with growing horror, if there is a community conspiracy against real leisure time for children today. And, as a mother, I'm beginning to suspect that we may have lost the whole idea of leisure time, and the necessity of it in a technological world.

Just what is leisure time? To me, it's that wide-open time when children don't have to be doing anything in particular. They are accountable to nobody for the educational value of what they're doing. If they want to spend that hour tinkering with bikes, fine. If they



Summer approaches and parents begin receiving invitations to organized leisure time activities for their children. But don't children still need time to collect spiders, tinker with their bikes, or even gripe about their boredom? Are we "programming" our children?

prefer to spend that hour griping about their boredom, fine.

Because leisure time is just that—leisure time. We parents get nervous when we see our children idle, so we scurry about filling their time with planned activities. After a sum-

mer or two of this, the child rebels.

His nature tells him that he needs to be free to explore, to dream and to become restless, but he doesn't know how. We've successfully stripped from him any confidence in his own ability to entertain himself.

He may want to go canal-exploring or clubhouse building but he waits for us to tell him when, where and how. The pity of it is that we do. After watching his restlessness for awhile, we step in exasperatedly and say, "Well, for heaven's sake, go find Tom and go to the canal. Wear your sneakers and be home by dinnertime".

He returns for dinner, pro-

grammed to have us tell him what to do after dinner and after breakfast and after . . .

This parental manipulation of a child's precious leisure time is mutually abrasive. I don't know of a mother who enjoys doing it, but we find ourselves on a treadmill. Our child is bored and he refuses to entertain himself so we sign him up or drive him over or buy him something until he's bored again. But we're angry with ourselves for doing it because we know it isn't good for the child.

You've probably guessed by now that I learned this the hard parental way. When our eldest was three, it struck us that every time we saw her quiet

and apparently bored, we stuck a toy in her hand. Soon, she looked to us rather than for a toy. When we stopped, she suffered all the withdrawal symptoms for two full days—refusal to do anything but whine, wandering from yard to room, and so on.

Then she got bored with boredom and began chasing caterpillars. Perhaps it wasn't the ideal alternative but it was a start. Today, she and her brothers consider themselves lucky to be able to "sneak" away from the house to work on their innumerable projects.

They don't envy their highly-programmed little friends a bit. And I don't envy their mothers.

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Communion in the Hand

By FR. JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

Last week we outlined the historical background and current status of a controversy concerning various methods for distribution of Holy Communion. We also sketched several reasons for retaining the traditional manner of placing a consecrated host on the tongue of each communicant.

This column will summarize some of the arguments for an alternative approach—presenting our Lord in the hands of communicants:

1. Advocates can, like their adversaries, enlist support from tradition, specifically by citing the common practice of early Christian churches. St. Cyril of Jerusalem describes the fourth century procedure for Communion in this section from his *Mystagogic Catecheses*: "When you approach, do not go stretching out your open hands or having your fingers spread out, but make the left hand into a throne for the right which shall receive the King, and then cup your open hand and take the Body of Christ, reciting the Amen. Then sanctify with all care your eyes by touching the Sacred Body, and receive it. But be careful no particles fall, for what you lose would be to you as if you had lost some of your members . . ."

2. This is not a matter of doctrine, but a question of discipline. The Church can, may, has, and will alter its human, man-made laws. The manner for distributing Holy Communion is one of those regulations, helpful perhaps over many centuries but now in need of repeal or at least adjustment.

Worship and The World

3. God in Genesis said everything He had made (including man's hand) was good. Christ by becoming like unto us in all things except sin forever sanctified this world of ours. Through baptism an individual Christian shares in the victory of Christ and by it his whole body becomes a temple of the Spirit.

In light of these considerations how can we assert that the person's tongue is a reverent place for our Lord's body, but not his hand? Why should one's (clean) palm not be equally as respectful a receptacle for the Eucharist as one's mouth?

4. Many bishops during the last year have delegated lay persons in parishes to assist with the distribution of Communion. These men and women never received sacred ordination to the priesthood; their hands lack the holy oils which in the eyes of some empower an individual to hold the host. Why, if that is the case, not permit an ordinary worshiper at Mass to accept the eucharistic Jesus in his own hands?

5. Children are fed; adults feed themselves. To receive the Lord on one's tongue smacks of infantilism; to accept Him in one's hand and then consume this holy body seems more mature, more fitting for persons who have passed beyond childhood.

6. The new guidelines for ma-

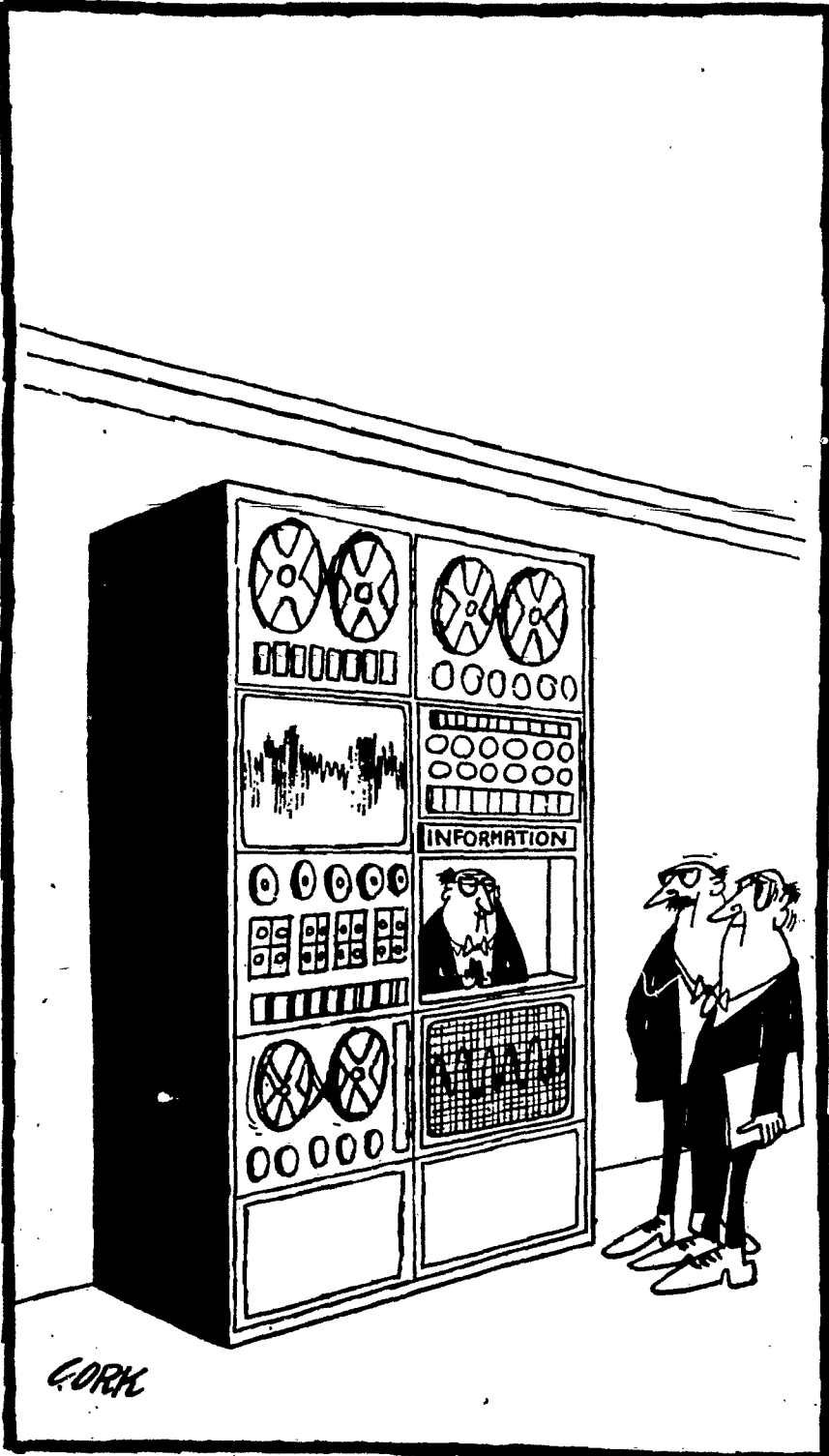
terials used at Mass encourage the development of hosts which have greater substance, look more truly like bread, and can easily be broken into portions for at least some of the faithful. To place these larger sections into a person's mouth is awkward. Further, significant particles of such innovative altar breads often drop on the recipient's clothing.

These practical considerations coupled with the difficulty of a short celebrant reaching to a tall communicant renders Communion in the hand not only theologically sound, but functionally desirable.

What will happen in the United States? It is too early to tell. The recently established Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions has undertaken a survey in each diocese. If the results show a positive sentiment in favor of Communion in the hand and if the American bishops act on this affirmatively at their November meeting, Rome's Congregation for Divine Worship very likely would approve such a request.

Implementation, however, should be accomplished in a gentle, free manner. No authoritarian dictates from the pulpit, no introduction without a thorough explanation of the "why," no insistence that Communion in the hand is the only method now sanctioned.

Introduced like this, Communion in the hand holds the freedom of individuals in high regard and manifests a sensitivity to their personal feelings. In summary, it preserves a unity in worship while permitting a diversity of approach.



Humanity—it makes a difference.

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