

Sweeping Changes to Come In New Divine Office

By FR. JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

"When will the new breviary be ready?" During the past year this has been the most frequent question I have heard from priests in the United States.

Critics who demean the value of a revised Divine Office can point to fairly significant facts in support of their assertion that we are backing a dead horse and dealing with a non-problem.

I do not intend in this column or in the next ones to argue for or against the Divine Office as a valid method of prayer for contemporary men in parish work. I wish instead only to present something of a progress report on the current breviary reforms.

Even if one doubts the suitability of our Divine Office for modern man, he can hardly debate the basic necessity of prayer in some form for an effective ministry. The Vatican II Fathers underscored this principle in the Constitution on the Liturgy as a foundation for the breviary reforms decreed in chapter IV, articles 83-101.

"Priests engaged in the sacred pastoral ministry will offer the praises of the hours with fervor to the extent that they vividly realize that they must

heed St. Paul's exhortation: 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Timothy 5:17). For only the Lord can give fruitfulness and increase to the works in which they are engaged. 'Without me,' He said, 'you can do nothing' (John 15:15). That is why the apostles, appointing deacons, said: 'We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4). Article 86."

The Council in that section supplied the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy with general directives for renewal of the Divine Office.

Liturgy officials in Rome next proceeded to call upon 80 experts from various parts of the world to assist in the monumental project and divided these individuals into 12 study groups who were to report at twice-yearly sessions of the Consilium.

In 1967 the first Synod of Bishops approved the proposed general principles for the revised breviary and in 1969 the bishops of the Latin rite received a sample of the reformed Divine Office for one feast day and one weekday.

Criticisms and suggestions of this tentative model will be incorporated in the final ver-

sion, publication date of which remains uncertain due to complications in developing additional and alternative biblical and patristic readings.

Several national hierarchies, notably the French, sought and received some months ago approbation for use of an "interim version" on an experimental basis until the completed volume has been issued.

An English publisher, Geoffrey Chapman, Ltd., currently is engaged in preparing a similar "Interim Version of the New Roman Breviary" called the "Prayer of the Church" for a number of countries, particularly Ireland and Canada.

Here in the United States our Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy plans to examine this manuscript at a September meeting for possible recommendation of it to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November as an optional alternative to the present breviary.

If both bodies give affirmative decisions, it seems some relatively swift publication and distribution procedure could be worked out permitting American priests to employ this provisional and optional Divine Office early in 1971.

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KNOW YOUR FAITH

Q. and A.

By FATHER RICHARD McBRIEN

Q. I just read a report that contributions to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith declined last year. Doesn't this just reflect the growing indifference of Catholics toward the work of bringing the message of Christ to all mankind? After all, why should we bother supporting the missionaries when we don't really care if another man is a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, or even an atheist?

A. Msgr. Edward O'Meara, national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, said that it is still too early to tell if this decrease in contributions is significant. He was more inclined to blame the sagging state of the American economy than any other factor.

You could be right, of course, that some Catholics have stopped giving to the missions because they no longer see any point to bringing people into the Catholic Church. They would find no support for their views in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

However, if you mean to imply that our recognition of truth in other religious bodies has hampered the missionary effort, I should not be prepared to agree. All men are called to obey the will of God and to enter his kingdom (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 16-17).

Not all will come to the Kingdom through the Body of Christ, but we don't know beforehand who is called to explicit membership in the Church and who is not.

Therefore, the Church has the abiding task of announcing the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to as many people as possible with the real hope that some will hear the Word and join the community which proclaims it.

Significantly, the council acknowledges that other religious bodies can be effective means of salvation. "The Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions" (Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, n. 2).

If our acknowledgement of truth and holiness in other religious bodies means that some Catholics will give less or nothing at all to the missions, then that is a consequence we simply have to live with. The alternative (i.e., emphasizing the negative features of non-Christian religions) is unacceptable.

Q. Several priests are running for political office this year. Doesn't this violate some basic doctrinal principles regarding the priesthood?

A. There is no theological or doctrinal objection to a priest's running for political office. This is not to say that it is an ideal pastoral arrangement. Indeed, the American bishops recently discouraged this practice.

A Catholic should judge each candidate on his own merits. He ought not to vote for or against a man simply because he happens to be a priest.

Those who oppose priests' running for office assume that this could never be justified, under any circumstances, ordinary or extraordinary. No persuasive theological or doctrinal argument has been brought forth to support this assumption, nor did the American bishops use any such argument in formulating their own views on the question.

Q. I know of some Catholics who encourage their Protestant friends to receive Holy Communion from time to time. I have heard about so-called ecumenical eucharists celebrated in homes. I must admit that this is rather disturbing to me and some of my friends. How can a Protestant receive Communion at a Catholic Mass?

A. According to present Church law, he may not.

Will there ever come a time when intercommunion will be approved by the Catholic Church, at least on special occasions? I think so. Several theological committees have been discussing this question in the past three or four years (e.g., Catholic-Lutheran, Catholic-Episcopalian, Catholic-Presbyterian, Catholic-Disciples of Christ, and Catholic-Eastern Orthodox). Of these groups, only the Catholic-Orthodox committee has issued a discouraging report on the immediate possibilities of intercommunion involving their respective churches.

This is a controversial matter, I know. It is easily open to misinterpretation. But Catholics should not be led to believe that intercommunion is an absolute impossibility, something which can never be justified and, therefore, never will happen. If this impression is allowed to stand, and if at some future time the Catholic Church does accept intercommunion on a limited basis, we'll have the same kind of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" among sincere, traditional Catholics that we have already experienced on other important issues.

Article 8 of the Decree on Ecumenism puts the issue succinctly: "As for common worship, however, it may not be regarded as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians. Such worship depends chiefly on two principles: it should signify the unity of the Church; it should provide a sharing in the means of grace. The fact that it should signify unity generally rules out common worship. Yet the gaining of a needed grace sometimes commends it."

REV. JAMES T. McHUGH

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The Future of the Family

By FR. JAMES T. McHUGH

What is the future of the family?

The gloom-doom specialists are quick to tell us that the family has had it. One of four marriages ends in divorce. The young are already finding new forms of communal living to replace the family. And in a world of violence, war and bombs, it's better to "hang loose" than to get tied into anything too permanent.

A Catholic variation of this theme maintains that if marriage and family life has any future, the Church has nothing to say to it, because marriage is an exclusively secular reality.

The thesis is intriguing, but not very convincing. First of all, the number of people marrying continues to increase each year, reaching its highest point in our history in 1969, with the exception of the post World War II boom in 1946. Recent studies of young engaged couples indicate that this generation looks on marriage as a permanent union based on mutual love and fidelity.

To be more specific, in our day marriage is no longer a mechanism for physical and economic survival, but a union of two persons joined together by human love, who must always retain their individuality while building a new identity in their conjugal roles as husband and wife.

The love that binds them to each other is truly a human

love, always capable of greater intensity and depth, and equally open to stagnation and loss.

People once may have married because they needed each other, and in marriage they came to love one another. The process is now reversed. Young people love one another and marriage provides the best opportunity for them to fulfill their mutual affectional needs. The outgrowth of their mutual love is community-building, i.e., the family.

Moreover, there are some who fear that the industrial revolution weakened the family and that technology is completing the destruction. But it seems to be that in our highly technologized society it is absolutely necessary for every person to have a clear idea of who and what he is, with a sense of purpose and personal value to others. For my money, this is best accomplished in the family, where personal identity and self-meaning are most capable of realization.

It is within the family unit that the conflicts of the impersonal world can be walled out to some degree, and husband and wife can enjoy periods of privacy and intimacy.

But there is something more that marriage offers, something that responds to a special craving of modern man. At a moment in history when we seem to have conquered the earth, the moon and the stars, man is still possessed of a spirit of adventure. And marriage—though its success calls for stability,

security, commitment — still represents the great adventure, the challenge to risk all for someone else, and to travel into a future that is unknown and uncharted.

The social scientists tell us that the earmark of our society is rapid and continuing change. And marriage fits this pattern, for the two persons who become married are themselves growing, changing and developing. Their family unit reflects their personal growth and their mutual maturity. But they don't just fit into the process — they are the determiners of it, "the captains of their soul."

The dynamic of marital growth is dependent on the quality of communication between the spouses. That communication is both human and spiritual. It may be verbal or sexual. It ought to be meaningful, playful, and joyful. No matter how you describe it, it must always be personal.

We must not overlook the fact that for Christians, it is their own proper path to holiness, not the sugar-coated piety type, but the deep and abiding witness to the presence of God's love in the world.

In the final analysis, each family always exists in two worlds — that of the past, from which it transmits the best of man's accomplishments and discoveries, and that of the future, looking ahead with hope to new challenges and new achievements.

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