

Team Ministry Questions

By Fr. Andrew Greeley



As American Catholicism has deteriorated into chaos during the last half-decade, we have heard a steady stream of magic answers advocated to avert disaster. However much substantive content these answers may have had originally, they quickly become slogans.

The latest addition to the list is "team ministry." Let me make it clear at the beginning that I am completely in favor of experimentation with new forms of ministry; many of the problems we have today are the result of the absence of experimentation in the past. Almost any kind of ministry would be an improvement over the old pastor-curate relationship which was one of the last remnants of feudalism (along with the teacher-pupil relationship) to be found in the modern world.

But one must ask a number of tough questions about any such "experiment":

1. First of all, is it really an experiment? Have criteria been set up beforehand to determine whether it succeeds or fails? Have methods been established to evaluate its effectiveness? Or will it be a "success" if the team members like it?

2. Secondly, have the objects of the new ministry been consulted and given their consent to the experiment? One frequently has the impression that the team ministry is imposed on parishioners whether they like it or not. An exercise in democracy which begins in such fashion is at best a dubious kind of democracy; and it is not much improved if the rank and file are asked to rati-

fy a decision with little real opportunity to veto it.

3. Is it really ministry or an exercise in self-indulgence? Do the members of the team intend to respond to the needs and demands of their community as the community defines them or as they themselves define them, a priori? I have heard of one team that is alleged to have announced that it has better things to do than to minister to the local hospital, and of another that says it does not want to be concerned about money matters (how backward of St. Paul to have been concerned about such things). And yet another has proclaimed that it is not interested in parochial schools. Parishioners may find that they have traded in a monarch for a league of barons — and perhaps lazy barons at that.

4. Are the team members kidding themselves about the possibility of dispensing with leadership? Leaderless groups may exist in sensitivity theory, but in the real world of human community and human organization, leadership is needed to provide for the bookkeeping and housekeeping details, to protect the rights of community members, to see the "big picture" of the community's goals and to ask the challenging questions to which the community must respond.

5. Finally, is the "team ministry" rooted in a clear and meaningful reformulation of values and goals? Does it manifest an explicit and confident faith? Or is it merely one more attempt to reform the Church by the relatively easy technique of fiddling with the structure?

More Letters to the Editor

Mass Changes Regretted

Editor:

Each generation coming of age wishes to leave its mark on the decade, and this often spells "Change." Some changes are for the better, but others, after trial, fail to meet more satisfactorily the needs of the majority. Radical changes can defeat the purpose intended.

While hearing Holy Mass in the vernacular, with participation of the laity in the Confiteor, Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, Our Father, Agnus Dei does bring about more involvement in the Holy Sacrifice and is therefore, in my estimation, a change for the better as far as the majority is concerned, it must be pointed out that previously the congregation using St. Joseph's, Maryknoll or other

missals, could easily follow the prayers through English translations on pages opposite the Latin used by the priest, learning at the same time the beautiful Latin. In other words, the laity were not in the dark as to the wording of the prayers.

Some other changes, however, have not in the opinion of some of us been for the better, viz. use of guitar instead of organ music, selection of other songs in place of those religious songs cherished in the past and the discontinuance of after Mass prayers. I feel that with these changes there has been a breakdown in reverence and that a somewhat lower level has been sought in order probably to equalize our services to the Protestant services, in the spirit of Ecumenism.

I find "On the Right Side" by Father Cuddy to contain very sane philosophy and con-

sider him to be an interesting and perspective person to whom age has brought much wisdom.

Ethel E. Seracu
Rochester

K. of C.

Offers Thanks

Editor:

On behalf of the officers and members of Rochester Council 178 Knights of Columbus may I extend our thanks for the pastoral letter from Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, to the Pastors in our council area and for the assistance we received on the recruitment drive in honor of Pope Paul VI.

The results of our program with this cooperation and the dedication of our members have been very gratifying.

K. A. Bennett, grand knight
Knights of Columbus,
Council 178
Rochester

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