

Instruction on Intercommunion

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On June 1, 1972, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity issued an Instruction concerning the conditions under which other Christians may be admitted to Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. So many read just headlines and are liable to be misled by them. What did the Church really say about intercommunion?

The instruction is intended to help bishops when they have to make a decision in regard to admitting a Protestant to Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. The regulations in the Instruction are based on two doctrines about the Eucharist. The first is that the Eucharist is the sign of the unity of the Church. The second is that the Eucharist is a spiritual nourishment which serves to unite a person to Jesus and draw him closer to His Church.

These two statements are of equal importance. Both must be safeguarded. One cannot be sacrificed in favor of the other. The regulations in the instruction shows how both these statements can be, and are, in fact, preserved.

Generally speaking, a Protestant who requests Holy Communion in the Catholic Church bases his petition on the fact that the Eucharist is a channel of grace — a spiritual nourishment, a bread that makes men strong, a food for eternal life. Any baptized person has need for the Eucharist. Our Lord said, "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (Jn. 6:53). To obtain grace, therefore, a Protestant sometimes may want to receive Holy Communion in the Catholic Church. And the Church, concerned as she always is not to deny any baptized person all the possible helps he needs in the journey of life, does not hesitate to make an exception, even in the matter of offering him Holy Communion. But to avail himself of this concession, a Christian who is not a Catholic, must fulfill six conditions.

1. He must have a faith in the Eucharist in conformity with that of the Church.
2. He must have a deep sense of spiritual need for the Eucharist.
3. He must have been unable, over a prolonged period, to communicate in his own Church.
4. He must request Communion of his own accord.
5. He must lead a life worthy of a Christian.
6. His receiving Holy Communion must not endanger or disturb the faith of Catholics by its being misunderstood as a sign of unity.

These conditions are imposed to safeguard the truth that the Eucharist is the sign of the unity of the Church. Intercommunion, therefore, must never be permitted should it ever be construed by Catholics as a sign of unity, as though the separated brother receiving it were in good standing in the Catholic Church, even when not in full communion with her.

Worship is the expression of faith just as words are the expression of ideas. Catholic worship is the expression of the Catholic faith, so much so that an old theological axiom was coined long ago which says, "The law of praying is the same as the law of believing." Thus in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, Catholics pray for what is specifically Catholic; namely, for the

Holy Father, for their own bishop, for the entire Episcopal College, for the souls in purgatory, to Mary the virgin Mother of God, and so on.

As our words must say what we mean, so our worship must express what we believe — What we believe in its entirety! Thus neither baptism alone, nor even belief in the Real Presence, of themselves entitle one to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing expresses an integral profession of faith. As such, intercommunion will of its very nature be the last step in the reunion of Christians. In fact, the Decree on Ecumenism cautioned against employing "worship in common as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians" (Art. 8).

So to the oft-asked question of Protestants in good faith, "Why can't I receive Holy Communion in your Church?" the basic reason is that the Eucharist is the sign of full communion with the Church. As such, it cannot be shared by one who is not in fact fully united with the Church. To receive Holy Communion, without fulfilling the six conditions enumerated above, would be doing just that. Such a person would be saying, in effect, that "I believe in the Holy Father. I believe all that the Catholic Church teaches." To say that by the act of receiving Holy Communion, and not really believe fully in the Church, would be, to say the least, acting in complete insincerity. However, to receive Holy Communion will not convey this message when one fulfills the conditions laid down by the instruction. Under those conditions, receiving Holy Communion says only that one believes that the Eucharist gives spiritual nourishment and that one feels he stands in great need of such food.

Number 55 in the Eucumenical Directory (5/14/67) sums up the entire matter precisely and concisely:

"Celebration of the Sacraments is an action of the celebrating community, carried out within the community, signifying the oneness in faith, worship and life of the community. Where this unity of sacramental faith is deficient, the participation of the separated brethren with Catholics especially in the sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance, and anointing of the sick, is forbidden.

"Nevertheless since the sacraments are both signs of unity and sources of grace, the Church can for adequate reasons allow access to those sacraments to a separated brother. This may be permitted in danger of death or in urgent need (during persecution, in prisons) if the separate brother has no access to a minister of his own Communion, and spontaneously asks a Catholic priest for the sacraments — so long as he declares a faith in the sacraments in harmony with that of the Church and is rightly disposed. In other cases, the judge of this urgent necessity must be the diocesan bishop or the Episcopal Conference."

Deaths

Fr. Schoenherr

Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated Thursday, Sept. 7, for Father Irenaeus Schoenherr, OFM, a 93-year-old Franciscan friar who died Sept. 4 at St. Bonaventure University. Father Schoenherr was one of the oldest priests in the United States.

For the past 34 years, Father Schoenherr had been National Director of the Guard of Honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, an international organization fostering devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This was his 75th year as a member of the Franciscan order, and his 67th year as a priest.

He was born in Kleinlueder, Germany, in 1879, and came to the United States in 1926.

Father Schoenherr is survived by one brother Anton Schoenherr, of Kleinlueder. He also leaves six first cousins in Rochester. They are Sisters Joanna and Theresa Louise, SSJ; and Olive, William, Joseph and Edward Schoenherr.

Mary Clines

Ithaca — Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated Aug. 31 for Miss Mary Clines, 86, who died Aug. 25 at the Tompkins County Hospital after a short illness.

Father John Maloney was principal celebrant at the Mass, which was held at Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca.

Miss Clines was an organist for Immaculate Conception and a private piano teacher for more than 50 years. She graduated from Immaculate Conception School, Ithaca High School, and was a member of the class of 1908 of the Ithaca Conservatory of Music.

She was a member of the Catholic Daughters of America, Sigma Alpha Iota Sorority, Ithaca Music Club and the Tower Faculty Club.

Miss Clines is survived by three brothers, Bernard L. Clynes, and James J. Clynes Jr. of Ithaca, and Edmund Clynes of Rochester, as well as several nieces and nephews.

Girl Scout Award News

At a Father Daughter-Award Sunday-Mass and Communion Breakfast at St. John the Evangelist on Humbolt Street various awards were given to the Scouts.

The following girls from Troop #799 received their First Class Awards which are the highest awards in Girl Scouting: Maureen Casey, Patti Cook, Susan Geiger, Margaret Gorski, Janet Mylius, Mary Nunn, Deborah Prattico, Laurie Rabideau, Melinda Weidenborner.

The Marian Awards were presented to the following girls: Shelly Bartman, Anna Casolari, Karen Cavellero, Mary Doohler, Kathy Geiger, Diane Glidden, Donna Glidden, Ann Hanley, Judy Kastner, Mary Carroll Kaltenbach, Amy Nunn, Robin Oliver, Nancy Phillips, Jane Schirmer, Cindy Sharick, Norah Tierney, Sharon Watson, Diane Winterkorn.

Business In the Diocese

Announcement of the appointment of Robert P. Carges as treasurer of Elmira Savings Bank has been made by William S. Bushnell, president.

A graduate of St. John Fisher College, the new treasurer has been a member of the Rochester Chamber of Commerce, the Rochester Chapter of the Bank Administration Institute and has been active in a Junior Basketball League there. Carges and his wife are residing with their three children at 515 Esty St.

Jack Slattery has joined Hart/Conway as an account executive in the Public Relations Division.

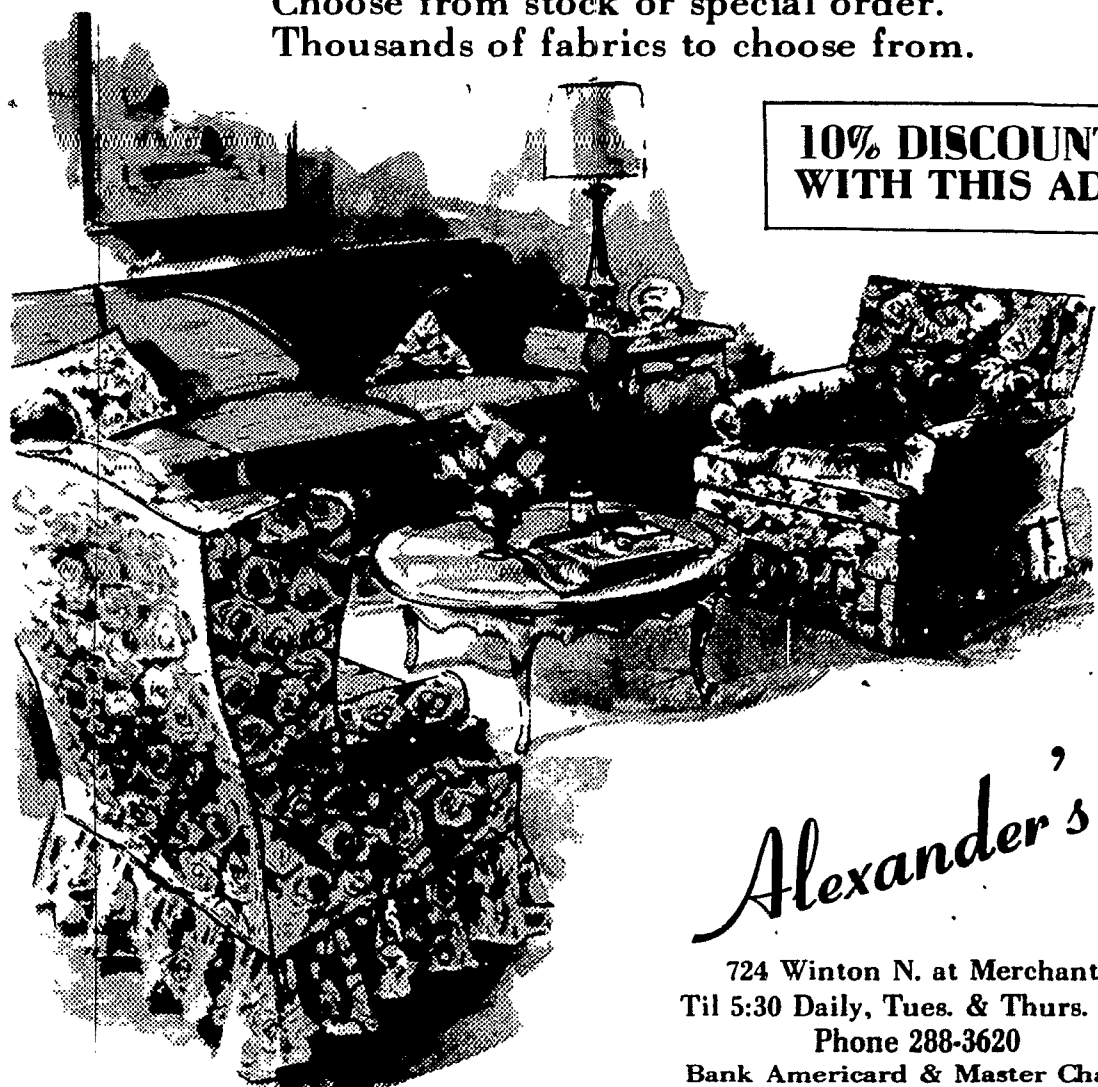
Slattery is a native Rochesterian and son of a former city fire chief. Not to be confused with the radio personality with the same name, this Jack Slattery's background is in newspaper. He began his career in 1948 with the Democrat and Chronicle.

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