

Ministry: Work of the People of God

Several years ago, I was traveling with a family who have long been my friends. We had stopped to visit other friends in a small New England village. As our hostess was giving us a tour of the town, one of the little girls in the group noticed a tall young man in a Roman collar walking some distance ahead. She quickly said: "Look, Mommy, there's a priest." Our hostess recognized the man as the pastor of the Lutheran Church and politely corrected the little girl by saying, "No, dear, that's not a priest, that's a minister."



While I am sure that my friend was simply trying to make the little girl aware of the different leaders of the religious denominations, it was an interesting distinction that she made, and one that well reflected the thinking of the time. It has taken us many years of ecumenical dialogue to understand that all men and women who are ordained as leaders of their respective Christian denominations share in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Priest and Minister alike are called to be special servants to the people of God and indeed to all of God's creation.

Unfortunately, however, we have not yet come to really understand that responsibility for ministry does not rest only with the clergy. Ten years ago, Vatican Council II taught that the faithful are "made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ" and that "besides intimately associating them with His life and His mission, Christ also gives them a share in His priestly function of offering

The Slot Man

Courier Readers Solve Mystery

A couple of weeks ago in this spot we told of the efforts of a Californian, Donald Moran, who was trying to trace his family tree and had run into a snag when he couldn't locate a Mary Calahan, last known address in Rochester.



We told then of how the Courier-Journal had learned that she had been married to a James Leary and asked if anyone had information to pass it along for Moran's benefit.

Thanks to several calls

spiritual worship . . ." (Lumen Gentium, 31 and 34.)

And yet today, we are only beginning to implement these statements. We are only beginning to realize that the real changes in the Church have little to do with the language of the liturgy or the position of the altar of sacrifice. We are only beginning to see what ministry means.

Ministry is hard to define but easy to describe. Ministry is what Jesus meant when he said, "Love one another as I have loved you" or "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do it unto me." Ministry is taking patient care of your children; it is listening lovingly to your neighbor who so desperately needs a friend; it is visiting the nursing home or sending in a meal for a family who has lost a loved one.

But, you might say, Christians have always done this, whatever name you might give to it. And I would agree. But now, in the light of the Council, Christians are called upon to be even more involved in ministry. Read carefully the words of Vatican II:

Let sacred pastors recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the layman in the Church. Let them willingly make use of his prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to him in the service of the Church, allowing him freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage the layman so that he may undertake tasks on his own initiative. (Lumen Gentium, 37)

Now it is no longer possible to hide behind the idea that the Church belongs to

the priests and bishops. Instead we must recognize our co-responsibility for the Church of Jesus Christ and its members. This is why Parish Councils are established. This is why social action and liturgy committees are set up. This is why parents are challenged to be deeply involved in educating their children for First Communion and Confirmation. Through these means, and many others, men and women Christians are sharing in the ministry of Jesus Christ, caring for all people as God's creatures, offering the love and praise of service to the God who made them, exercising their "Priesthood of the Faithful." They are facing the awesome responsibility and privilege of being part of the people of God.

Interestingly enough, this change in our thinking with regard to ministry is being mirrored in the central act of the Christian community, the Eucharistic celebration. It is here that we see the ministry being shared. No longer is the Mass entirely a clerical function. Now the Lector, a layman or woman, reads God's Word. The Acolyte, another layman or woman, helps to distribute the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ. The Deacon reads the Gospel and often preaches. The Priest is president of the assembly and offers the sacrifice in our name. These four offices, together with the bishop, make up the five ranks of ministry. In the liturgy, then, the reality of the shared ministry is made forcefully visible.

In the next three weeks, I would like to discuss three of the ranks of ministry that are rather new to our liturgical celebration: Lector, Acolyte and Deacon. It is my hope that such a discussion will help us all better understand our roles as ministers to the People of God.

By Carmen Viglucci

from readers, we have learned that Mary Calahan Leary died at a young 51 in the Fall of 1971. However, her father, Timothy Calahan, whom Moran has assumed to have passed on, is indeed alive, about 82 years old, and living in the Town of Greece.

Seeing the information from different sources jibe, as the calls came in, proved to be intriguing, as were the comments about Mary Calahan — "very beautiful as a young girl", "full of life" — and about Timothy Calahan — "very happy"

Our particular thanks to Martha Dobson, Mary Nichols and Mary Cleary for their help.

Congratulations to Brett Costello of Irondequoit who walked off with a first prize in the Science Fair at Stella Niagara. About four years ago, Brett was described as a "born loser" in this paper after a series of unlikely experiences. Eleven years old now, he requalifies as a winner. His father, Anthony, is the Courier GM. Brett's project was a comparison of printing techniques.

Recently we ran a picture of the old St. Feehan's Church, captioned "remember when?" Mrs. Minnie Senz does indeed, recalling dances there in the 1920s. She remembers when it was called "the swamp church."

Editorial

A Challenge to Our Legislators

There is a false sentiment among casual observers of the abortion struggle in the New York State Legislature that most legislators who voted to repeal the liberalized law did so only to appease right-to-life voters; that they felt it was safe to vote for repeal, confident of Gov. Rockefeller's promised veto anyway.

This may have been so with a few but most legislators who voted for repeal acted out of conviction. After all, they generally are no more or less moral than any cross-cut of society. Remember also that there was great pressure from pro-abortionists as well.

The Supreme Court decision providing abortion-on-demand may have negated discussion of repeal at this legislative session. It also reflected monumental lack of concern for the unborn and an inhumane attitude toward those faced with abortion as a painful alternative.

Those who simply see abortion as a birth control measure, will have no problem with the ruling. People who, for instance, get pregnant then simply abort their responsibilities for comfort are their own concern.

There are others, however, who want to have their babies but for varied reasons must consider abortion as an alternative. They may be unwed minors, those who have reason to believe the baby will be physically or mentally deformed, those who cannot even afford the cost of giving birth, those who know they cannot afford another mouth to feed.

Of course, we cannot sanction abortion for even those in such dire straits but we must give them practical reasons and compassionate support enough to enable them to reject death as an alternative.

The Courier-Journal in this and ensuing editorials will issue a series of challenges to our area legislators to provide laws that will provide sympathetic and practical help for those facing the prospect of abortion.

We ask that a bill be proposed to:

- Grant aid to families who adopt a child with a physical or mental defect.

There already are organizations (Council for Adoptive Parents locally)

which specifically promote the adoption of hard-to-place children of which mentally and physically impaired children constitute one category.

Such adoptions naturally require more than love; unusual medical bills often become a way of life, making it impossible for many who want to adopt such children to do so. A bill providing aid for such people to pursue their wishes would not only fulfill them but also erase a reason for killing the unborn.

It is germane to point out that there are indeed very few, if any, "unwanted" children. Adoption agencies, especially since liberalized abortion, just don't have enough children to satisfy all those qualified families wanting to adopt.

We advise legislators to check with adoption agencies, check with the Council of Adoptive Parents, check with Birthright, check with their own convictions.

This is only one area where imaginative legislation can help alleviate a desperate situation.