

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Good Liturgy Never an Accident

I promised last week to write about an experience that made my Summer a special grace of re-creation — the two days of the Liturgical Institute at St. John Fisher College, sponsored by the Diocesan Office of Liturgy and our Liturgical Commission. Father Robert Hovda, the editor of Living Worship, and a member of the National Liturgical Conference, provided the inspiration to more than 300 of our diocese who assembled to manifest their concern about the health of the Church of Rochester as a community of faith and of worship worthy of the word 'Celebration.' For that is what the liturgy is supposed to be — the assembly of a community at prayer in the presence of a transcendent God who liberates us joyfully from all of our gods whom we are tempted to serve slavishly each day. I had every reason to be present for the Conference, if only to express my personal concern for the health of the Church of Rochester as a worshipping community. For I am convinced that our liturgies are a barometer of our faith. Lackluster celebrations are indicative of lackluster faith. I must admit that I return at times from parish visitations discouraged to find that we have communities who seemingly have nothing to celebrate — who dutifully assemble each week as strangers and depart with the same apathy that accompanied their entrance into the church.



When the II Vatican Council assembled to find ways to resurrect us from our spiritual sluggishness, the liturgy was its first focus

and its first document. Pope Paul spoke of the validity of this primacy of attention as no accident, because of the intrinsic worth and importance of the liturgy for the life of the Church. Let me quote from the CONSTITUTION on the SACRED LITURGY promulgated on December 4, 1963:

"For it is through the liturgy, especially the divine Eucharistic Sacrifice, that the work of our redemption is exercised. The liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church." Par. 2

"The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows." Par. 10

"But in order that the sacred liturgy may produce its full effect, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their thoughts match their words, and that they cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebration. It is their duty to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully." Par. 17

To prepare our priests to meet the demands of the role of president of our liturgical assemblies, the II Vatican Council issued this directive:

"The study of sacred liturgy is to be ranked among the compulsory and major courses in seminaries and religious houses of studies; in theological faculties it is to rank among the principal courses." Par. 16

We have come a long route from the days when liturgy was equated with rubrical precision and Wapelhorst was our guide to direct us in acceptable performance of gestures, inclinations of the head and tones of voice. The automatic 'ex opere operato' of effective celebration has thankfully given way to the challenge of intelligent and active participation of the whole community of faith.

The Liturgical Institute was a sign of hope. To see so many of our family concerned about finding ways to ensure the knowing, active, and fruitful participation of the Church of Rochester as a worshipping community gladdened my heart. Good liturgies do not just happen. We have to plan them and be a community of faith worthy of assembling to celebrate.

Let me, finally, recommend two articles which came to my attention as I was preparing this column. The first was written by Father William O'Malley of McQuaid Jesuit High School and was prompted by his concern about the apathy of teenagers to liturgical celebrations. It provides much food for reflection and will appear in the Courier-Journal with my approval. The second was written by Father Warren Rouse, OFM, in the September issue of the Liguorian and is entitled, "Eight Ways to Kill a Liturgical Celebration." Our Liturgical Institute sought to provide ways to keep them alive. The paths to death we had already walked.

vatican news

'An Ignoble and Blasphemous Outrage'

Pontiff Blasts Erotic Film on Christ

Castel Gandolfo [RNS] — Pope Paul VI has denounced Danish government-backed plans to make an "erotic" film on the "loves" or "love life" of Jesus Christ as an "ignoble and blasphemous outrage."

"News has come to us," the Pope told a crowd of pilgrims, "that in Denmark, a country dear to us, and famous for very different reasons, it is planned to make an indecent and erotic film on Jesus Christ, which will be produced and released in different countries."

Speaking from the balcony of his Summer residence in this hill town south of Rome at noon on Aug. 26, the pontiff observed that "already much criticism" had been voiced, and "disgust and complaint" expressed over the film project, and added:

"We cannot be silent about our personal anguish for the ignoble and blasphemous outrage, which is aimed at deforming the untouchable figure of our Saviour, the supreme object of our faith and our love. The whole Christian religion will be offended by it."

The state-controlled Film Institute has granted Danish director Jens Joergen Thorsen \$100,000 toward the making of the movie, which is to have the title, "The Loves of Jesus Christ." Some reports have said the title will be, "The Love Life of Jesus Christ."

In any event, according to an earlier report, Mr. Thorsen has frankly admitted that the picture will be "erotic and irreverent."

Pope Paul expressed his conviction that "freedom of art, history or culture" could not be invoked as justification for the planned Danish film, "which is an

affront to what is most sacred in the world and to what believers hold most dear."

"Christ," the pontiff noted, "has been made the laughing-stock of sacrilegious and filthy lies."

"Where," he asked, "is our common moral and civil conscience? Can we allow our lives to be degraded to such a point?"

The Pope linked the Danish film project to "a broad and dreary pornographic market," which, he said, "is spreading with extreme facility and seems to find no dam," in an era of permissiveness "to which base calculations of vile profits are not extraneous."

"It is for this reason," the pontiff concluded, "that we speak of this sorrowful phenomenon with such intimate grief. We want to express our fidelity to Jesus Christ, our most pure and crucified Saviour."

Earlier, L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican City daily, scored the proposed Danish film on Jesus as an "insult to sacred values."

The Vatican journal described as "disconcerting, not to say intolerable," the Danish authorities' decision to subsidize the movie.

"To allow impiety to be proclaimed," it said, "to give a green light to attacks on the very sacred person of Christ — even worse, to support with state money such impiety on the screen — is a serious violation of the rights of citizens who believe in Jesus."

Pope Paul, in his address, pointed out that many Protestants also had reacted against the film project.



The pontiff displays outrage over plans to film an erotic life of Christ.

In early August some 10,000 people reportedly took part in a mass demonstration in Copenhagen against the film. The demonstration was organized as part of an international "Festival for Jesus" sponsored by a group representing eight Christian denominations in Denmark.

The pontiff made no mention

in his address, but a report out of Capetown, South Africa, said the South African Islamic Propagation Center had sent strongly-worded telegrams to the United Nations and to the government of Denmark protesting governmental support for the project.

H. E. Vanker, secretary of the

Islamic Propagation Center, was quoted as telling newsmen in Capetown that his organization took strong exception to this "diabolical action" of the Danish government.

"No Muslim," he said, "can tolerate the besmirching and tarnishing of the holy character of the Holy Prophet, Jesus ..."