



THE CHURCH 1974 Fr. Andrew Greeley

In a frontpage article (in any newspaper in the world) the ineffable Dale Francis crowed with triumph, "Communion in the hands has been overwhelmingly defeated." (Eight more bishops voted against it than voted for it.)

The issue was dead, Francis chortled. It was not likely to rise again. No priest in the country would give Communion in the hands in the future, at least not legally. Francis heaved a literary sigh of relief. One more victory for the forces of goodness and righteousness against those who would destroy the Church.

But that very week at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, in the presence of bishops, priests were in fact giving Communion in the hands. The controversy began to take on the dimensions of a parable.

In itself how one receives Communion is a matter of monumental triviality. That it became a subject of major controversy reveals a good deal about the present state of

American Catholicism. The advocates of Communion in the hands represent the still substantial segment of the Catholic population that believes that messing around with ceremonials and forms is the way to make the Church relevant.

The opponents of it represent the equally substantial group in the Church that seems to believe you can resolve religious crises by passing laws and making rules. Both groups have one thing in common: at a time of crisis they do that which they are good at doing instead of doing that which is good.

In the years before the Vatican Council we were assured by all the liturgical reformers that changes in the liturgy would produce a marvelous surge of piety and religious responsibility. The changes came, far more dramatic and numerous than even the most hopeful reformers expected, and the result has been neither piety nor responsibility. At the same time, Church attendance seems to have declined by about 30 percentage points.

It is not so much, I think, that the laity are opposed to the new liturgy. On the contrary, all the evidence seems to indicate that they rather like it, although many find many accidentals (such as kinky and tasteless personal innovations of priests) to be distracting and annoying. The massive failure of liturgists consisted in their inability to develop an educational program to accompany liturgical change. They seemed to have had the same blind faith in the magical power of ceremonies as their opponents did. Many of them are still playing the same old game, continuing to believe that it makes a lot of difference whether one receives Communion on the tongue or in the hands.

Since my archdiocese is not inclined to let me do parish work on Sundays I rarely have a chance to distribute Communion to large numbers of people, but I must say that each time someone snatches the Host out of my hands I wonder what in the world they are trying to prove, what kind of point they are trying to make. I am, of course, duly put in my place. My monopoly in handling the sacred Host has been taken away from me. I am no better than the layman who has just snatched the Lord from my hands. Hurray for him.

Does anyone seriously think that many of those 108 bishops who voted for freedom of choice will really clamp down on their clergy? And does anyone think that in this day and age chancery office patrols can be sent out into the parishes to make sure the rules are obeyed by a clergy who long since gave up taking most rules seriously?

Those whom the gods would destroy they first make mad.

And so we have one faction of the Church messing around with trivial changes and another faction responding to problems by making rules. In the meantime, the question of how Catholic worship might bring illumination and a sense of direction to a population desperately hungry for meaning is not only not answered, it is not even seriously raised. It takes real brains to drive people away from church at a time of desperate religious search. But the trivialists of the right and the left have made common cause on just such a venture.

And it is worth noting, incidentally, that the collapse of church attendance has been particularly bad among the Irish. What a millennium-and-a-half of British tyranny could not accomplish, less than a decade of folly has achieved!

Philadelphia Offered for Site For Congress

Philadelphia (RNS) — The 1976 International Eucharistic Congress of the Roman Catholic Church probably will be held here in conjunction with the nation's 200th anniversary. If it is, it will be the biggest single event in the bicentennial year drawing several hundreds of thousands of people.

In addition, the event could bring Pope Paul to Philadelphia. He has attended two of the last three eucharistic congresses, 1964 congress in Bombay, India, and the 1968 congress in Bogota, Colombia. The Pope did not personally attend the congress in Melbourne, Australia, in 1973, but he had made a trip to the Far East, including Australia, in 1970.

The U.S. Catholic bishops approved Philadelphia as the site for the 1976 congress and the approval was seconded by the Inter-Board of the Eucharistic Congress. Only the Pope's approval remains to be given.

The proposal to hold the congress in Philadelphia is linked to a nationwide spiritual renewal with the Church in America, a spokesman for the Philadelphia archdiocese pointed out. It will be preceded by a year of special renewal programs throughout the country, which will be held in connection with the 1975 Holy Year decreed by Pope Paul.

Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, who is also president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, proposed the project to the American bishops and it won approval.

It is expected that more than a million persons would attend the congress, and according to City Representative Harry Berlinger, Philadelphia offers facilities for mass meetings which are "unmatched in the world."



Parish Calendar

Father Raymond Heisel, pastor at St. Margaret Mary's, reviews the parish calendar with Stan Stahura and Maurice Brunner recently elected chairman and vice-chairman of the Parish Council. Other officers are Genevieve Glatz, recording secretary; and Eileen Meisenzahl, corresponding secretary. More than 100 parishioners attended the December meeting of the council. Newly elected members include George Siebold, Mary Alice Manning, Chester Pisarek, Ruth Scherberger, Dave Kausch, Lou Tiberio, Regina Knauer, and Bill Carpenter.

Plans Ecumenical Fete

An ecumenical dinner sponsored by St. Thomas the Apostle Church of Irondequoit has been scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 16, at the church hall.

Clergymen and congregations of 11 Irondequoit houses of worship have been invited to the dinner. Invitations have been extended to All Saints Episcopal, Church of Christ the King, Irondequoit United Church of Christ, Resurrection Lutheran, St. John's Lutheran, Temple Beth David, St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic, St. Margaret Mary's, Temple Emmanuel, Seneca United Methodist, and Summerville Presbyterian.

A sherry hour will start the evening at 6:30. It will be followed by a steamship round dinner to which women of the parish are bringing salad and vegetables.

Msgr. Richard Burns, pastor, and Fathers Daniel Holland and Andrew Kalafsky will be on hand to welcome guests. Speaker will be Father Charles Mulligan, director of the Office of Human Development.

Tickets, \$3 each, are available from Ann O'Brien (544-8242), Barbara Kelly (342-8441) and Pat Kerwick (342-2237).

Business In The Diocese



Terrance A. Falk, assistant vice president, has been named manager for First National Bank of Rochester, Pittsford.

He was reassigned to the Pittsford branch after interim service as manager of the bank's recently opened Irondequoit office at Georgetown Plaza.

A native Rochesterian, Falk graduated from Aquinas Institute and the University of Rochester. He and his wife Sally, and their three children belong to St. John of Rochester parish, Fairport.

Lincoln First Bank has named four assistant vice presidents, James L. Sloan, manager of the Gates office, Thomas G. Snow, of the corporate banking department, Charles C. Wetmore Jr., manager of the Highland Hills office and Kenneth S. Wilber, manager of the Fairport Road office.

Sloan joined the bank in 1965 as a management trainee. A native of Rochester, he graduated from McQuaid High School and St. John Fisher College.

He is presently attending Dartmouth College's graduate school of credit and financial management. He is also director of the St. John Fisher Alumni Association.

Wetmore is immediate past president of the Rochester Junior Chamber of Commerce, president of the Rochester Boys Club and a board member of the Junior Achievement and Catholic Youth Organizations.

An Albany native, he's a graduate of Clarkson College of Technology.

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