

# The Eucharist: Primary Sacrament Of Reconciliation

Fourth in a series  
By the Diocesan  
Liturgy Commission

We are speaking in these articles about reconciliation in the Church. We have seen that reconciliation is not some isolated activity in the Church's life, but constitutes the very heart of that life. The Church exists to create communion among people and of people with God. Reconciliation is a process that is continuous in the life of the Church and in the life of her members. It cannot, therefore, be restricted simply to the sacramental activity that is proper to the sacrament of Penance.

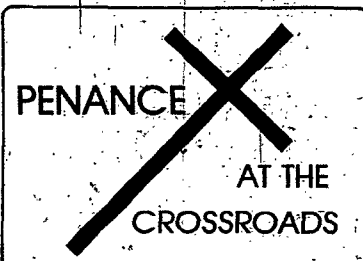
Indeed, when we think of sacramental reconciliation in the Church, we should think first, not of Penance, but of the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is the primary sacrament of reconciliation. It has always been the teaching of the Church that sins are forgiven in the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Indeed, for the first 800 years in the Church's history, Penance could be received only once in a lifetime. It was the sacrament for the forgiveness of serious and public sins. For these 800 years and for a good while longer, the Eucharist was the normal channel for the remission of venial sins.

Many moral theologians today suggest that mortal sin is a fairly

rare occurrence in the life of Christians who are sincerely striving to do God's will. If this is true, it highlights the efficacy of the Eucharist as the primary sacrament of reconciliation. Some might ask the question: "If the Eucharist is the primary sacrament for the forgiveness of sins, why do we need the Sacrament of Penance at all?"

One answer is that the Sacrament of Penance gives a density and an intensification to the reconciliation effected and experienced in the Eucharist. The Eucharist reconciles; the sacrament of Penance concentrates on the process of reconciliation. It makes it possible for us to celebrate in a unique and personal way the forgiveness of the Father and our repentance.

When we celebrate God's forgiveness and our repentance in the sacrament of Penance or in



the Eucharist, we celebrate them as realities already present. We come to God in a spirit of repentance. But we do not come merely with the hope that we may be forgiven; rather, we come with the assurance that God, like the father of the Prodigal son, is eager to forgive us our sins. We have no doubt of His mercy; we do our best to respond in repentance.

In the Sacrament of Penance we celebrate the reconciliation that is effected by our acceptance in repentance of the forgiveness of our Father. The Sacrament of Penance is therefore an important encounter with Jesus in the life of the Christian. It intensifies our experience of a process of reconciliation that takes place in the Eucharist and that is a continuous reality in the Christian life.

## Fr. Gibbons

Continued from Page 1

language. He taught at St. Andrew's for 18 years, at high school and junior college levels. When the minor seminary was discontinued, he joined the faculty of its successor, Kings Preparatory School. He holds a master's degree in the classics.

Father Gibbons is a

Rochesterian, from Holy Rosary parish. He was ordained June 6,

1942, from St. Bernard's Seminary and served as an assistant at St. Monica's, then at St. Ann's in Hornell, until 1949. While at St. Ann's, he taught medical ethics and Christian formation in the St. James Mercy Hospital nursing school. He helped out weekends at many area parishes during his years at St. Andrew's.

# Courier Wins Top Prize In Statewide Contest

The Courier-Journal has been awarded first prize for general excellence for 1974 by the New York Press Association, it was announced last week in Albany.

General excellence is the prime category in the annual contest sponsored by the NYPA whose membership includes weekly secular newspapers from across the state. The Courier-Journal is one of three Catholic publications that are members along with the Buffalo and Rockville-Centre newspapers.

Considerations in the general excellence award are news content, makeup and appearance, feature stories, special columns, editorial page, letters to editor, cartoon, photography, advertising (including makeup of ads and ratio of ads to news), and printing quality.

The judges in making the award said, "While the specialized audience and religious news coverage for the Courier-Journal makes its task difficult, this paper presents an attractive, interesting combination of news, editorials, features and photos."

"News stories are well organized and concise, with good short leads and short graphs — a bonus not found in most papers in this category," the judges said. "Features, especially in the centerfolds, blend copy and photos well, and the use of feature pictures with caption-copy only is a good idea."

"The paper rates high in community service as illustrated by its extensive survey of political candidates regarding decriminalization of marijuana use and possession, and liberalized abortion laws," the judges said.

"Editorials are localized and relevant, with other editorial comment supplied by a good crop of letters from readers. Layout, headline and printing quality are excellent," they concluded.

Though the Courier-Journal has won first prizes in other categories in the statewide contest, this is the first time it has captured the general excellence award.

Anthony J. Costello, general manager, said "The award for general excellence is especially gratifying because it covers every phase of newspaper work. Thus the award belongs to each and every member of the staff."

### POOR MAN'S SUPPER

Dansville — In keeping with the Lenten practice of sending alms to the poor, the Liturgy Committee of St. Mary's with Pat Connors as chairman is sponsoring a Poor Man's Supper each Wednesday at 6 p.m. with a meal consisting of soup, bread and coffee which is prepared by Our Ladies Guild, with Monica Malone and Lorraine Wicks making the soup.

# PLAN NOW TO JOIN BISHOP JOSEPH L. HOGAN

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