



Cheryl Bowker asks questions on the day's Scripture readings.



The Liturgy Committee meets monthly to prepare packets of information that are distributed to families. Working here are Nancy Murphy, Sister Marie Margaret and Sandy Boerman.



Sister Marie Margaret, director; Mary St. Marie and Paul St. Marie.



The Social Committee is in charge of setting up the altar and the chairs as well as providing for the social hour. Shown are Robert Seymour, Alice Klahn, James Klahn, Kay Seymour and Michele Seymour.

The Family Mass: *An Adventure In Liturgy*

Newark — Imagine, for a moment, a gymnasium packed to capacity with enthusiastic men, women and children excited by what is going on inside. But, instead of a sporting event, the main attraction is a participated liturgical celebration, a Family Mass.

Family Mass, held each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. in St. Michael's School, is an adventure in liturgy begun three years ago, and given impetus by the parish response to a Christmas liturgy. At that time, an idea was conceived to celebrate a special liturgy which would bring both scripture and doctrine together to present a living faith to the youngest Catholics of the parish.

What was begun primarily as a teaching tool for the children has been realized today in the strengthening of parish and family ties and a deepening of faith commitment by adults who have become personally involved in the preparation and execution of participated liturgies.

"When you work on a liturgy and see it unfold on Sunday, it becomes a part of you," said a young mother recently after working on her first liturgy.

"Suddenly your fears and doubts and all the little things you had to do to get everything ready becomes your prayer to God."

Getting people involved with God and with each other is an integral part of Family Mass.

"When my wife came home and told me she had signed us up to do a liturgy, I told her she was crazy!" said a father who had felt this "was the job of the priest."

"It turned out to be one of the greatest experiences in my life!" he later admitted.

Preparations for the liturgy begin three to four weeks in advance of the actual celebration. Usually several people work on a specific liturgy or theme. However, organizations such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, and groups representing various renewal movements have taken on this responsibility. A veteran liturgy committee at the parish is always available for guidance and resource material.

After signing up for a particular Sunday, one of the persons responsible will receive a packet of information listing all steps necessary in preparation of a liturgy. The theme is listed as well as the readings for that Sunday. Ideas are given for banners, playlets, collages and demonstrations.

A "theme sheet" is then prepared which incorporates several paragraphs explaining the theme of the Mass and giving several questions or activities to be done by the family at home. This theme sheet is typed and distributed to families at the liturgy a week before the actual Mass is to be celebrated.

The Mass itself is the highlight of all activity, opening with a procession of children and banners. Little children are seated on carpet squares in a semi-circle in the center of the gym floor around the altar.

Adults and teenagers are seated in folding chairs and bleachers and a few baby carriages shelter brand new Catholics just inside the door.

The readings before the gospel are done mainly by the children of the families who prepared the liturgy and the celebrant preaches the gospel. The homily is structured for a child's level of understanding with concluding remarks to the adults. Sometimes a playlet or demonstration is presented to enhance the gospel message.

Music is provided by a 15-member group which has grown to include a string bass, drums, violin, banjo, tambourine and harmonica. This group, which meets every Thursday to rehearse, also is learning Spanish music.

The intercessory prayers are given by the children. The children are also invited to follow the gestures of the celebrant during the Elevation. The importance of the Eucharist in the lives of families and the community is often demonstrated in the joyful moment of a First Communion. And a Communion meditation always provides a time for reflection and thanksgiving before Mass is ended with a closing song. A social hour is provided to foster fellowship and to carry out the gesture of peace given during the Mass.



and demonstration by Marge Graf.



Family Mass. Shown are Ricky Boerman, Amanda Frank and Marge Graf.