

Resourcing a Liturgy Committee

By FATHER ROBERT J. KENNEDY

In looking forward to a new year of planning, parish liturgy committees often renew the search for helpful resources. Practical helps are always appreciated by those who have discovered that liturgy planning is a complex and mysterious adventure. Such committee members have also found out that liturgy planning aids, model liturgies and homily helps soon wear out, leaving the committee and the congregation thirsty for new ideas.

There are at least five tools or resources that can help meet this need — some so close we may miss them.

(1) The Calendar of Liturgical Seasons and Feasts. There is a tendency in some preachers to want "to say it all" all at once. The same tendency can be found in planning a given liturgy to want to celebrate the whole mystery of salvation at once. It is true that the liturgy does celebrate the whole mystery, but no one particular celebration can emphasize the whole depth and dimension of the act of God's saving power for us. Thus, the liturgical calendar is offered so our attention may be focused on now this aspect of the mysteries of our faith, now that one. The ebb and flow of seasons and feasts allow us to revel in each dimension as it is celebrated, with

INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

ordinary times of the year for normal, less celebrative and solemn reflection. Liturgy committees need to spend time discussing and reflecting upon the meaning of these seasons so that their planning may highlight the richness of faith contained in each.

(2) Lectionary and Sacramentary. These two books are basic resources for all liturgy planning and for understanding the liturgical seasons. Not only do they contain all the readings and prayers for liturgical celebrations, but also their introductions — as we mentioned last week — are wellsprings of information and worthy of every committee's study. Probing the wealth of themes and expressions of praise and prayer contained in these books will enable a committee to celebrate the liturgy creatively for a long time to come.

(3) The Introductions to the Sacramental Rites. These introductions are more than explanations of how to celebrate the particular sacraments. They present

prophet. And Isaiah told them not to be frightened. "Be strong, fear not!" He said. "God is coming to save you. You'll see. And you'll hear about it. When you do, then like a blind man who gets his sight or a deaf man his hearing, you'll jump and sing for joy. No need to worry about the homeward trek, from Babylon to Palestine; the arid deserts will give water just as happened when your forefathers journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land."

In the Gospel, Jesus left Tyrian territory and returned to the Sea of Galilee by way of Sidon. That would be like going from Waterloo to Rochester by way of Elmira. The reason why Jesus took this circuitous route was to be alone with the Apostles. It was during this long sojourn with Jesus alone that Peter began to realize just who he was. When they reached Caesarea-Philippi, Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Faith comes from hearing the word of God. God's words are formulated in truths or creeds. The twelve heard Jesus for a long while, but only after being with him alone did they begin to realize who he was. So faith began by hearing God's word must grow — from faith (the theological virtue) to faith (one of the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit).

We begin the life of faith by first accepting the truths of faith (creedal faith). But by living the life of faith, we begin to experience Jesus (personal faith). We must progress from the words of faith to the Word. This happens only if we have true faith. If we have this faith, we become more attentive to the word and begin to proclaim it. If we do not live the faith, we become like the deaf-dumb man. We begin to cease to understand the faith and begin to say dumb things about it and ultimately lose it.

the rich meaning of each rite, its role in the Church community and, above all, its relationship to the work and message of Christ. These introductions are probably the most overlooked resources available to a parish committee. Yet their study will yield a rich harvest of understanding that can be passed along to the parish community through the bulletin or newsletter, educational programs and homilies. Having an understanding of what the renewed rites say will enable more heartfelt celebrations.

(4) Printed Resources. So much printed material is on the market that it is next to impossible to know which books or periodicals will most benefit the parish liturgy committee. The Office of Liturgy tries to keep current and solid bibliographies on various topics, and its own publication, *Liturgy Resources*, attempts to summarize a variety of material on topics most in demand, like children's liturgies and music. Probably the best single source of help for committees is the *Catholic National Bulletin on Liturgy* (90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 7B1, \$7 annually), published five times each year and including background on various topics such as liturgy committees, the liturgical year, the lectionary and so on, with practical ideas for planning and celebrations.


(5) People. The best resource a committee has are the people of their own parish and community. Artists, musicians, communications experts, flower arrangers, ushers, readers and those willing to launder and clean are all important in the process that leads to a celebration of the liturgy. It is important for a committee to know who these people are, and to invite (reasonably!) their contributions, paying them for their services when necessary.

A committee must also keep in mind that each and every person who comes to worship is a valuable resource: worshippers themselves make the liturgy rich in meaning because it is the faith of us all that is given joyful expression through the gathered community.

HEADS ORDER

Vatican City [RNS] — An American has been elected superior general of the 446-year-old Barnabite Fathers order, Vatican Radio reported. He is Father Steven M. Gracini, 44, for the last 12 years head of the American Province of the Barnabites, with headquarters in Buffalo, N.Y.

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr.
Albert Shamon

Sunday Readings: (R3) Mark 7:31-37; (R1) Isaiah 35:4-7; (R2) James 2:1-5. **23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

The theme of Sunday's readings is that a man who possesses true faith doesn't play favorites. We do, you know, when we give preferences to the well-off and neglect the poor. Should we do this, we would be saying in effect that the well-off are better than the not so well-off. St. James says that by doing that we are setting ourselves up as judges and are handing down corrupt judgments.



The fact is God often does just the opposite: He chooses the poor and makes them rich in faith and heirs to his kingdom. The rich he sends away empty — not that he has anything against the rich. It is that the rich are well-off, they have no desires. They are self-satisfied, smug and complacent, and so deaf and dumb — deaf to God's word and dumb in talking about things of faith.

The first reading probably belongs to Second Isaiah. This prophet lived with the Jews in the Babylonian exile. They were not so well-off. They had been enslaved for over 40 years. Intimidated by years of the captors' cruelty, they were literally afraid of their own shadow. To these God sent His


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