

Insights in Liturgy

'In the Beginning . . .'

BY DAVID E. NOWAK

Thankfully, God did not consult the liturgical architects of the "revised" Introductory Rites in the new Order of Mass before He poised to breathe His Spirit over the waters of creation. According to the new rites of "beginning," God would have been expected to announce His arrival, find His place, greet the assembly (at least twice), and proceed to explain how His purpose, their presence, and someone else's proposal for parish catechesis are in the readings.

Then He would likely have had to tell the heavenly throng who is, why they are, when they're not, and what it means to be worthy to participate in this event. Finally, having by now given away the whole

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story of creation and its saving punch line. He would have had to throw in the last laugh by singing several troped antiphons and a climactic hymn before putting all this, and us, to rest with a tired plea to begin.

The Entrance Rites in the new Order of Mass were "revised" to have the character of "beginning, introduction, and preparation." The nature and purpose of these rites is to help the assembled people become aware of themselves as a unified, worshipping community (General Instruction of the

Roman Missal). However, our ordinary experience of the Order and practice of the Entrance Rites is not suitable or conducive to serve this function.

Father Jungmann, in his monumental study on The Mass of the Roman Rite, was led to comment that when we turn to the Roman entrance rite, "the thing that strikes us about the whole ceremonial . . . is its lack of coherence; we do not get the impression of something unified." Commentators and interpreters of the Mass scarcely ever treat it under one title. Each element usually receives an individual explanation unrelated to the others and the function of an entrance rite in the dynamic of the Eucharistic liturgy is lost.

A.G. Martimort reminds us that "the presence of the congregation and the entrance of the celebrant are, of course, the only preludes which are essential to the Mass." The entrance rite of the revised Order is a relatively minor element in the Mass liturgy with no absolute value attached to any particular form. Form is clearly subordinate to function. The function of the entrance rite is not significant in itself, but is merely a modest prelude to the more important liturgy of the word and eucharist.

If parish congregations argue for an extended entrance rite, not only will it become too cumbersome to alert their self-awareness as a worshipping community, but it will enable them to

ignore a more pressing problem. If the liturgy has become a surrogate for personal prayer outside of church, then a spirit of repentance or praise which is not already present in their daily lives will not be achieved in the space of a Confiteor or Gloria.

The entrance rite is basically a call to order and attention before the liturgy of the word — the primary means of the congregation's self-awareness as a worshipping community. However, it is a familiar experience that a lengthy and not entirely coherent entrance rite distracts the congregation and rivals the liturgy of the word in time and intensity. When the entrance rite becomes a proliferation of words to be "got through" then all the words throughout the liturgy are in danger of becoming equally important, and so, equally trivial.

The ritual dynamic expressed in the relationship of the entrance rite to the liturgy of the word, and in the rest of the liturgy as it unfolds, shows that one part does not precede the other by anticipating the one following, but by preparing for it. If the entrance rite is prolonged by making it excessively didactic, homiletic, or introspective, it turns into a series of disconnected devotional exercises, disassociated from, if not duplicating, the ministry of the word.

NEXT WEEK: Part II
"Elements of the rite."

one impels or compels us. The fault is in ourselves, not in our stars.

What blighted Joseph Armagh's life often spoils the life of so many others. Too many, like Joseph, let others, outside circumstances, dictate their lives.


What Jesus told people to do was to build up a strong inner life. "Be poor in spirit," He said. "Yearn for the right, weep for the wrongs of men, never be deterred by what others say or do to us" (R3). Given a strong hub, a person can take a surprising number of shocks and bumps on the outside rim without sustaining permanent damage.

So many today are only reactors. They let circumstances control themselves; they let other people's actions mould them; like mirrors their lives are only reflections. Instead, they should have the freedom of the sons of God built on inner strength; they should be like a tree planted beside the waters (R1), drawing strength from within, from the Holy Spirit who is as a fountain of love within us, so that love and light can go out from them no matter the outside circumstances.

God never let other people determine His actions. God loved the world even when it was not worthy of love. His love emanated from His inner goodness, not from ours. God first loved, and His love changed others.

The great tragedy of so many lives is that one's actions and attitudes are too often reactions to the actions and attitudes of others. When we let others control us, then we are changed and they are not. If, however, like the sun, we let love emanate from the Spirit of Love within us, independent of what others say and do around us, why then the darkness shall be penetrated and others shall be changed — "raised from the dead" (R2).

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 6:17, 20-26. (R1) Jer. 17:5-8. (R2) 1 Cor. 15:12, 16-20.

Among the great novelists of our times, I would rank Taylor Caldwell. A few months ago, I finished The Captains and the Kings, an epic historical novel.

Caldwell dedicates the novel to the young people of America. By laying open the mind and thinking of the hero, Joseph Francis Xavier Armagh (a double perhaps for Joseph Kennedy), youth can understand how they too can become cynical, rebels, irreligious and turned off by God, and country.

The great flaw in Joseph Armagh's character was his mistrust: with very few exceptions, he trusted no one. He let life and circumstance dictate his attitudes and reactions and life-style.

Mr. Montrose, Joseph's friend, perceived this character flaw and called attention to it in a memorable passage:

"Are circumstances always our driver, our jailer, our motives, and are we moulded from without or from within? Do we choose to become what we are — or are we forced into that becoming? Are we victims or masters?"

"We all choose what we wish to be. No one impels or compels us. We may delude ourselves that it is so, but it is not. The same wind which blows a ship on the rocks could blow it into safe harbor. In short, it is not the wind, but it is the set of the sail. A man who denies that is a weakling who wishes to blame others for his life" (pp 228-229).

Montrose was telling Joseph we are captains of our souls and masters of our own fate. We cannot blame others for our failures. No

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New Bishop Named For Albany, Phoenix

Washington, D.C. (RNS)— Two bishops have been named to head dioceses in the United States. Bishop James S. Rausch, general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for the past four years has been named ordinary of the Phoenix diocese. Father Howard J. Hubbard will be the new bishop of Albany.

Bishop Rausch has held the NCCB post for four years and also has been auxiliary bishop of St. Cloud, Minn.

Father Hubbard was elected last fall to serve as administrator of the Albany diocese when Bishop Edwin Broderick was appointed executive director of Catholic Relief Services.

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