

Insights into Liturgy

Confessional Box or Reconciliation Room?

By FATHER ROBERT F. McNAMARA

Up to recently, the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite was governed by rather strict prescriptions on the construction of confessionals. The canon law in force since 1918 said that the "confessional chair" of the confessor should be separated from the place where the penitent kneels by a "fixed and slightly perforated screen."

Catholic penitents themselves considered the "confessional box" as a source of grace and comfort in times of repentance. Its very anonymity allowed them to be both frank and unknown, except to the God to whom they confessed through his representative and "justice of the peace," the priest. On the other

hand, some penitents, whether because of physical disabilities or claustrophobic tendencies, or because some past experience had made this mode of communication painful to them, found confession in the closed confessional difficult, and perhaps neglected it for this reason.

In the new regulation on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, decreed by the Holy See on December 2, 1973 and now in effect in this diocese, the provision for the place of confessions is less specific. Paragraph 12 simply says: "The sacrament of penance is celebrated in the place and location prescribed by law." That means that, while the older type of locale will not be excluded, the bishops of each regional conference (in

our case, the American bishops) may allow alternative arrangements.

In the United States, many pastors are setting up what have come to be called "reconciliation rooms." These fit in even better than the "box" arrangement with the new rite of absolution, which prefers that the confessor "extend his hands over the penitent's head." The planning of reconciliation rooms has been on a "do-it-yourself" basis. The consensus of pastors seems to be that the reconciliation room should somehow permit both anonymous and face-to-face confession.

In his book, *Together in Peace*, Msgr. Joseph Champlin devotes a chapter to the subject of the reconciliation room,

illustrated by one that he developed. To combine both types of approach, it is usually necessary to have the screen and kneeler right within the door of the room, so as to protect the anonymity of the penitent. The confessor sits on the other side of the screen. Msgr. Champlin makes a wise suggestion about the space for the penitent: that a chair be provided there for persons whose disabilities make kneeling difficult. If the penitent prefers to have face-to-face confession, however, he can simply walk around the screen and sit in a chair facing the priest.

Other details are ad lib: paneling or carpeted walls (good acoustically, too); chairs, comfortable but not too large; heating and ventilation; signals to indicate occupancy. But avoid too much clutter, which might bring back the old problem of claustrophobia.

There are three approaches to setting up permanent reconciliation rooms in older churches. First, restructuring the old confessionals, if they are large enough; second, turning an available room into a permanent reconciliation room; third, building a separate room somewhere within the walls of the church.

Those interested in seeing the solutions arrived at elsewhere would do well to study the reconciliation rooms in the following churches:

Adapted old confessionals: St. Thomas the Apostle, St. Salome, Irondequoit; St. Mary, Corning; St. Cecilia, Elmira.

Adapted old rooms: St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. John the Evangelist, Humboldt Street, Rochester; Good Shepherd, East Henrietta.

Newly constructed rooms: Holy Ghost, Coldwater; St. Margaret Mary, Irondequoit.



St. Leo's Rectory

Above is the present priests' residence at St. Leo's Church, Hilton. This year, ground will be broken to build a new residence and parish administration center. The new building will have quarters for a full time housekeeper, consultation rooms, office area, meeting rooms for the Parish Council and committees, records storage and a machine room. The building will be fully paid for on its completion.

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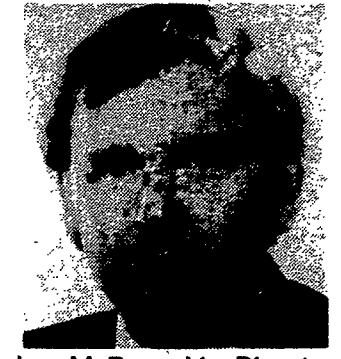
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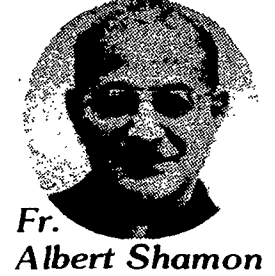
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WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 16:12-15. (R1) Prv. 8:22-31. (R2) Rom. 5:1-5.

Sunday is the feast of the Holy Trinity. This feast celebrates the life of God in Himself. Who is God? God is a community of loving Persons. Scripture calls Them Father, Son or Word, and Holy Spirit.

In the Trinity, "person" has a double meaning. First, it means "a someone who is unique, distinct from all others," a somebody who is nobody else. For instance, the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither Father nor Son. For over 1,500 years, philosophers defined "person" as a someone not another, a someone so distinct from all others that he has a personal pronoun or a proper name, all his very own. Individuality is basic to the notion of person, but it is only one side of the definition.

In the Trinity, "person" also means "a someone related to another," a somebody related to everybody else. For instance, the Father is father because he has a Son; nor could the Son be son without a father. And the Holy Spirit is such only because he is the personified love of Father and

son. Twentieth century psychologists have discovered this aspect of person. That is why so much stress nowadays is being put on interpersonal relationships. For since a person is a someone who relates to others, then persons develop or decline through interaction with other persons. Community life becomes all important.

In the Trinity the distinctive mark of their community life is unity. The three Persons are one God.

At the end of the last century, some Catholics petitioned Pope Leo XIII to have a feast in honor of God the Father, God the Son and at least Christmas and Easter; the Holy Spirit had Pentecost - but there was no feast for God the Father. In response, Leo XIII issued an encyclical letter correcting the implicit error. He pointed out that feasts honoring the Son and Holy Spirit honored the father also.

Just suppose any three persons - let's call them Harry, Harriet and Henry - had only one human nature, that all three used the same mind and same will. Would not everything Harriet knew be known also by both Henry and Harry? Anything Henry chose to do, would not both Harry and Harriet be equally involved in doing? In the Trinity, the three Persons actually do have one and the same divine nature; consequently, they all do share in every activity outside themselves. So instead of acceding to the untheological demand for a feast in honor of God the Father, Leo XIII instituted a feast of the Trinity, in order to affirm the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the works

of salvation.

This unity in the Trinity is dynamic, as well as ontological. It is a unity based not only on the sameness of nature, but also on love. The Trinity is a community of loving Persons. It was the love relationship between Father and Son that Jesus offered us as our model for loving one another. "May they be one as you Father in me and I in you."

To be fully person means to relate to others, to be in community. To be fully community means to love, to be loving persons. In this way, we on earth can witness to the life of God in heaven. To help us, "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (R2)

MONTHLY VIGIL

Father Joseph Trovato, CSB, will celebrate Mass at 9 p.m. Friday, June 3, in Holy Rosary Church, to start the night-long devotions sponsored each month by the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. The closing Mass at 6 a.m. will be offered by Father Enrique Rueda, who also will conduct one of the holy hours during the night. Deacon Steven Gagnier will lead devotions from 10 until 11 p.m.

CANDIDATES

Holy Cross Church recently announced the names of candidates for its parish council. Parishioners will vote June 4 and 5 for five council members among seven candidates: Sharon Ryan, Charles Scheg, George Yuna, Eileen O'Brien, Donna Robb, Chris Ortolani and Dan Donnelly.

COUNTRY FEST

St. Christopher's Church will hold a Country Fest June 3 and 4. Featured this year will be a craft show and sale. More than 45 exhibitors will display their crafts.

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Pius X Auction

The 24th annual Country Auction has been scheduled for Monday, June 13, at St. Pius X Church, 3000 Chili Ave. Mrs. Connie Aman and Mrs. Peggy Hanss, chairmen, are amidst hundreds of articles of glass, furniture, etc., to be auctioned. David Kent and Bill Kent will be auctioneers.

PLEASE HELP
See Page 20