

Insights in Liturgy

Institute '77: Parish Prayer

By DAVID E. NOWAK

Here and in weeks to follow, Insights will be looking toward this year's Liturgy Institute to be presented by the Office of Liturgy at Keuka College, Aug. 19-20. This and subsequent columns will touch upon topics to be expanded at the Institute under the theme of "Parish Prayer."

Our parish prayer, the prayer of the local Church is, at its best, the critical edge from which we discern the most basic reality and purpose not only of our Christian life but of life itself. For our life as Christians is inseparable, if it is truly Christ's life in us, from God's desire for all creation to be filled with His glory.

Parish prayer is a discernment, a discovery, not in the way we are accustomed to thinking about the world today. In a technological society we tend to limit our understanding to techniques for solving problems. Our analysis of the world tries to measure and manipulate "things" to create systems of means and ends which

lead us in a horizontal progress from one point to another. In prayer, we realize there is a different dimension.

Prayer is not the discovery of the relationship of one object to another as a means to an end, but as an end itself. The journey is not determined by an objective, but is an ever-deepening relationship to the world as a source and sense of mystery, ever-renewed as an expression of its sacred origin. In prayer, we discover what is already there.

Our prayer as a community of believers begins in our sense of the world as the expression of a gifted relationship with a God of mystery unfolding in and through and around us. We begin by experiencing what we already possess so that we may come to know that we already have everything. Everything has been given to us in Christ if only we take the time to let life fully come to itself in us, to savor, to experience time in a new way. "God has given us the

wisdom to fully understand the mystery." (Eph. 1, 9)

This revelation of God's presence, our public praise, our desire to revel in the glory of creation as the glory of God shown forth, is the purpose and reality of the life of the Christian community. In prayer, we become the local community of believers. "Prayer" is not modified, restricted by "parish." "Parish prayer" is not one form of prayer alongside others, but "parish prayer" is quintessentially "prayer." Parish prayer brings the parish into existence as the clearest and most intense experience of the presence of God in the salvation of the world. "Christ in you, your hope in glory." (Col. 1, 27)

That is our fundamental ministry, this service, this parish prayer: the unifying and unified experience of receiving God's touch in Jesus, of bearing God's "yes" and responding in praise. This is our apprehension of the God "about" whom nothing can be said, but before whom we cannot be contained. This is our celebration. Not to flee from normal life, but to withdraw from time to time in communal activity to attempt to fathom the depth and meaning of life. This is the revelation of "Christ's love which surpasses all knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3, 9)

Apart from prayer, there is no parish. Apart from parish, apart from the experience of faith in daily life, prayer will be but empty formulas. Apart from parish prayer, when we no longer reveal and renew the mystery of God's purpose shown forth in the human situation, we obscure if not

thwart the generous and creative power of Christ.

To pray as parish is to put on the vision of God of the "fulness of Him who is completely filling up all things." (Eph. 1, 23) Our Faith is our vision, a vision of the world filled with the glory of God. In and through prayer, we become like heavenly messengers who cry out, "Behold the glory of God with men, and He will dwell with them." (Rev. 21, 3)

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Red Cross Training Sessions

A number of three-hour courses in how to take blood pressure have been scheduled by the Rochester Red Cross Chapter during July, August and September.

Thursday, July 14, from 10-4 p.m.

Interested individuals may call the Red Cross at 275-9800 to enroll in the courses.

All sessions will be held at the Red Cross building, 50 Prince St. Classes are scheduled on Tuesdays from 1-4 p.m. on July 19 and 26, Aug. 2, 16 and 30, and Sept. 13 and 27 and on Thursdays from 6:30-9:30 p.m. on July 21 and 28, Aug. 4 and 18 and Sept. 1, 15 and 29. There will be a fee of \$2.50 to cover course materials.

Also, boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 14 who would like to learn babysitting skills are invited to enroll in a Red Cross Mother's Aide Course to be held on Tuesday, July 12; Wednesday, July 13 and

RECTOR ELECTED

Father Thomas R. Statt, rector of Becket Hall, has been elected to a two year term as vice president of the Eastern Regional Association of College Seminaries. The event took place during the group's fifth annual institute held recently at the Theological College at Catholic University of America.

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all aboard! the ARCADE ATTICA STEAM RAILROAD. SEASON STARTS MAY 28. Groups Welcome. Call (716) 496-9877. Free Parking & Picnic Areas. JUNE SCHEDULE Sat., Sun. and Holidays 12 NOON, 2 and 4 P.M. Adults \$3.00 Children \$1.50. Use Your Belts Coupon. ARCADE & ATTICA R.R. ARCADE, N.Y. RTE 39 OFF RTE 16 or 98

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 10:1-12, 17-20 (R1) Is. 60:10-14, (R2) Gal. 6:14-18.

The diptych painted by Sunday's readings is of the Church and the devil.

The first reading pictures Jerusalem, a symbol of the Church, as mother. Now a mother pre-exists her children. Too simplistically, we sometimes say the people of God are the Church and the Church is the people of God. This cannot be, since a mother must be before her children. The Church is Christ, His Body. He calls people into an assembly. Like a vine, He gives life to them, the branches. People do not make the Church as nations do the United Nations. The Church makes the people of God!

There is this about a mother — she fiercely defends her children. So when Jesus sent out His first disciples, He gave them power over the Evil One. After their first mission, the disciples returned elated. In jubilation, they kept telling Jesus, "Master, even the demons are subject to us in your name."

Hell is a conspiracy. Like all good conspiracies, its first requirement is that nobody shall believe in it. Baudelaire was right when he said, "The devil's cleverest wile is to make men believe that he does not exist."

And yet evidence from everyday life says he does exist. One night Thomas Carlyle took Ralph Waldo Emerson through the dark streets of London, and there Emerson beheld the carnage

of sin all about him. Carlyle said, "Do you believe in the devil now?"

We may not see the devil, but we can see his works. "There's no other explanation for some of the things the communists did," wrote Dr. Tom Dooley. "Seven little boys and their teacher were praying the Our Father, when Red soldiers came upon them. One soldier whipped out his bayonet and sliced off the teacher's tongue. The others took chopsticks and drove them into the ears of the seven little boys." Why? How explain Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Ravensbruck? The mass murder of innocent harmless people in the Ukraine? The liquidation bombings of Rotterdam, Hiroshima, Nagasaki? Only one adjective can describe these fiendish acts: diabolic.

Yet the Sunday readings are redolent with joy — "Rejoice," "Cry out to God with joy," "Returned in jubilation," "Do not rejoice so much in the fact that..." Why this accent on joy?

Because Jesus has given us a mother, the Church, against whom the powers of hell are powerless. "I have given you the power to tread on snakes and

scorpions (the biblical images for demons) and all the forces of the enemy."

That was the theme of The Exorcist. The story begins with a priest archaeologist excavating ruins near Nineveh. A statuette of a demon is uncovered. The discovery was meant to point out that Satan, who has always sought to pervert man, actually had succeeded before Christ. In fact, he was worshipped! The psalmist taunted pagans who worshipped idols: "Your gods are demons."

After Christ, Satan is confronted by the Church. Face to face with her, Satan is powerless. He is in fact exorcised! Hence the cause for joy. "I watched Satan fall from the sky like lightning." Christ meant the end of Satan's reign was beginning with the coming of the Church.

If Satan seems to be getting the upper hand now, it is because of a decline in faith. "Resist him strong in faith," said St. Peter. The faith that resists is one that believes in the sanctifying power of the sacraments of the Church and in prayer, especially to the Mother of God. Her children were promised victory over the serpent.

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