

Institute '77: Atmosphere of Prayer

By FATHER ROBERT J. KENNEDY

Liturgy has artistic and architectural consequences. Our celebrations of the Eucharist, the sacraments and other liturgical rites require certain space and settings that will enable, in the words of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the "full, conscious and active participation of all the faithful." But the revised liturgical rites of the Church hand us a problem, because our church buildings, chapels and oratories are like a suit of clothes after we've lost 30 pounds: they are usable and in good condition, but ill-fitting and not in keeping with our needs.

My purpose here is not to encourage parish councils to immediately authorize fund drives for the renovation and rebuilding of our churches, although this will eventually have to be done. Rather I want to provoke a preliminary step, namely, the sensitive reflection on how our liturgical rites and church buildings work an influence on each other.

Can the liturgy, as it is envisioned by the Vatican Council reforms, be properly celebrated in the buildings we now have? Do our buildings exercise an influence on the quality and spirit of our celebration?

To understand these questions, we must begin with an understanding of the revised liturgy itself. What does it demand? What are its primary emphases? Over all, the liturgy is and always has been the "work of the people," the whole

people. It is the way in which the body of believers speaks its words of love to God and hears back His words of love and healing and peace. The community must have, therefore, adequate room to do this well. This space must be flexible enough for the variety of "work" that has to be done: baptizing believers, singing God's praise morning and evening, reconciling penitents, anointing the sick, hearing God's word and celebrating Eucharist.

Thus, our buildings are not meant to be self-contained, stagnant beauties to be admired in and for themselves; in that case, they would simply be museums or art galleries. Rather they are meant to be used and used fully for the acts of worship (and other purposes, too, where necessary and appropriate) Above all, they are to be used fully by the people, they are houses for the people to gather in celebration and in worship of their God.

Each liturgical act calls the worshippers to focus on certain things: now the place of proclamation, now the celebrant at the chair, now the baptismal font, now the altar-table, now the faces of each other. We are not drawn to the altar-table, lectern, font or chair for themselves, but because the action that takes place in these locations is important and should command our attention. Thus, it is desirable that these spaces be clearly visible and uncluttered, that they not be overshadowed by other furniture or decoration, no matter how worthy these

may be, and that they be positioned so as to enable the full participation of those who come to worship.

We do not need two (or more) altars in our sanctuaries, nor do we need two lecterns, six kneelers, eight candles or an assortment of papers and leaflet missles. All we need is clear, uncluttered room for our actions to speak our praise and our symbols like bread, wine, oil and water to speak our sanctification.

The next time you go into your parish church, ask yourself some questions like: do I have a clear view of each liturgical action as it happens?; does the color, carpet, setting and people give me a sense of warmth and make me feel welcome?; do I feel my baptism is as important as my celebration of the Eucharist?; can I hear God's word proclaimed clearly and with meaning?; am I drawn into prayer with my brothers and sisters?

If you answer "no" to any of these questions, maybe it is time to start thinking of redoing the house

MARATHON

A cross-country marathon for boys and girls 9 to 18 years old is shaping up for July 30, under the sponsorship of the Immaculate Conception Community Center, the CYO innercity outreach program and the Montgomery Neighborhood Center. Details may be obtained by calling agency directors: Warren Smith, 546-5513; Tom Harris, 454-2030; Bob Watson, 436-3090.

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 11: 1-13; (R1) Gn. 18: 20-32; (R2) Col. 2:12-14.

The first reading next Sunday is about God's plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah — presumably for the sin of sodomy or homosexuality (Gn. 19:4). Since the media have been prating so much about this subject and have been spewing so many myths about it, it is in order to explore briefly the cause of, the morality of, and the solutions offered for this depravity.

The word "homo" in Greek means "same"; and the Latin word "sexualis" means pertaining to the sexes: male and female. The two words put together mean "the same sex" — man having relations with man, and woman with woman (lesbianism).

Science is still at a loss to discover the cause of homosexuality. There are two schools of thought: the nature school and the nurture school.

Those of the nature school hold that homosexuals are born that way. They are like a diabetic in the sense that they suffer a defect of balance in their endocrine secretions. We may note at once that there is positively no convincing evidence to explain the problem on such physical grounds. Nor is there conclusive proof that

heredity plays a significant role. "The once widespread view that homosexuality is caused by heredity, or by some derangement of hormones, has been generally discarded" (Time Essay, 1-21-66).

Those of the nurture school hold that homosexuality is acquired. "According to the best evidence so far," wrote Dr. Lawrence J. Hatterer, "homosexuals are made, not born, and a complex of life situations and influences throughout infancy, childhood, adolescence and early adulthood are involved in the making." (Changing Homosexuality in the Male).

What happened in ancient Greece seems to affirm the nurture school. Pederasty (the relations of a man with an adolescent boy) was not ingrained in the Greek character, as some have held. It did not exist, for instance, in Homer's time (c.1000 B.C.). It was a rather late development emerging after 500 B.C. The Greeks themselves traced the cause to the nudity in the gymnastic training which became so typical of Greek education at that period. Plato himself said, "Pederasty is the price paid for the nude gymnasium." We might learn from history.

In 1948 sexologist Alfred Kinsey estimated that 4 per cent of American white males were homosexuals. Given Kinsey's naive sampling methods, the figures were almost certainly wrong. However, the furor created by courageous Anita Bryant indicates that the growing permissiveness of the last 30 years and a hedonistic attitude toward sex are taking their toll and have encouraged many persons to "convert" to this way of life, who might have redirected their inclinations in another time or place.

As for the objective morality of homosexuality, there is no question. It is immoral! The Old Testament unsparingly condemns it. Leviticus has it: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination" (Lv. 18:22). The penalty for such practice was death (Lv. 20:13). In the New Testament Paul cites homosexual practices as part of the moral rot of the pagan world (Rom. 1:26-27).

Yet "at the present time there are those who, basing themselves on observations in the psychological order, have begun to judge indulgently, and even to excuse completely, homosexual relations. This they do in opposition to the constant teaching of the magisterium and to the moral sense of the Christian people" (Vatican Declaration on Sexual Ethics 8).

What, then, are the solutions offered? (To be concluded next week.)

Chicken Barbecue

St. Michael's, Montezuma and St. John's, Port Byron, will hold their annual Chicken Barbecue, at St. John's, on Saturday, Aug. 6. A painting by Regina Gates will be featured.

Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to Auriesville, N.Y. is has been scheduled by St. John's parish, Port Byron, for July 25. Father Bernard Kuchman, pastor, will celebrate Mass at the Shrine of the Martyrs.

PADRE PIO MOVIE

Elmira—Padre Pio of Pietrelcina — The Modern Stigmatic is the title of a film to be shown by Father Armand Dasseville OFM, Cap., at 7:30 p.m. in the basement of St. John's Church on July 21.

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