

**Insights in Liturgy**

**Ministers of the Eucharist**

By FATHER ROBERT J. KENNEDY

Auxiliary Ministers of the Eucharist are those persons who assist the priests and deacons in the distribution of Holy Communion at Sunday Mass and other special occasions, and who bring the Eucharist to the sick and shut-in of the parish community. It has always been a genuine ministry in the history of the Church; but, like so many other things, it has been lost for a time and is now being rediscovered in answer to specific needs in our own time.

In the 1973 Roman document "Immensae Caritatis," these needs were described as three: (1) when no priest or deacon is available, (2) when the priest or deacon is prevented from administering Holy Communion because of another pastoral ministry or because of ill health or advanced age, and (3) when the number of the faithful requesting Holy Communion is such that the celebration of the Mass or the distribution of Communion would be unduly prolonged.

This would mean that auxiliary ministers could be appointed to distribute Communion at Services of the Word or Morning or Evening Prayer if the priest were away for some reason; in these cases they could

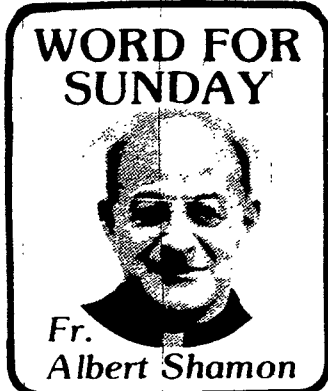
bring Communion to the sick. They could be appointed to assist with Holy Communion on Sundays, Holydays and other special occasions, especially in the light of the shortage of priests and the large number of communicants. And, so the sick and aging parish members may continue to participate regularly in the Eucharist, especially on the Lord's Day, auxiliary ministers should be appointed to bring them Holy Communion since the priest has his responsibilities at the church.

Eucharistic ministers are usually commissioned by the pastor of the parish after consultation with other members of the parish staff, the parish liturgy committee, and or the parish council. What qualifies a person for the exercise of the ministry is his or her consecration in Baptism, and their degree of eucharistic devotion and faithfulness in living the Christian life. The presence of the eucharistic minister at Sunday Mass or to the sick is a sign that we are continually striving to be of greater service to the Church and the world. It is also a sign of encouragement and hope to the whole assembled community, a sign which says their faith is not ill-founded, it is real and it works. The eucharistic minister, then, is not presented as a model of

perfection, but as an example of the whole community's striving for closer union with the Lord.

The eucharistic minister should be a people-centered person, whose concern and interest is in people and not in things. In presenting the host (and the cup) to the communicant, the minister of the Eucharist engages that person in saving dialogue with Christ and the Church. The announcement of "the Body of Christ" calls the communicant to accept a share in the dying and rising of Christ and to recommit him or herself to the works of love in the name of the Lord. The minister too makes the same commitment to an active participation in the work of Christ through the Church.

Finally, with the re-institution of the Ministry of the Eucharist, we have made more visible the diversity of gifts and ministries in the Church, affirming the fact that each one has a ministry to perform, a gift to give, which builds up the whole body of Christ, the Church. Ministers themselves are renewed and spiritually uplifted by the experience of their ministry; the sick, infirm and shut-in have found strength and a new sense of belonging because of the visits of eucharistic ministers and their families; and the whole parish becomes a reminder of the loving presence of God in our world.



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 17:5-10, (R1) Hb. 1:2-3; 2:2-4, (R2) 2Tm. 1:6-8, 13-14.

These are wonderful times— not the worst nor the best—but wonderful times, like the days of the Church in the first chapter of the Acts. God's Spirit seems unleashed— a new Pentecost has come! And the evidence is the renewal groups flowering everywhere. The sixties no longer look sick and sad; in hindsight we can see that the turmoil and tumult of that decade were only the travail pains for the new birth now taking place everywhere in the Church.

You may wonder what's wrong with me. What am I talking about? Why this effusion? Well, I've just finished a Marriage Encounter Weekend. A few years ago, I also experienced a Cursillo. At present I am deeply acquainted with teen seminars and Genesis. What remains for me is a charismatic weekend. What I see is exhilarating. I would encourage every priest, Sister and lay person to make any one of, and if possible, all of these weekends.

When I was asked to go on a Marriage Encounter, I sort of laughed. "Marriage Encounter is for married people," I quipped. "But you're married to the people of God, Al," retorted Father Leo Klem. "Moreover, your presence will witness to

married couples that you're interested in them, that you care. You care by sharing."

Father Leo did not need to persuade me much, for I was half hoping that someone would ask me to make a Marriage Encounter. The reason was there are nearly 40 couples in our parish, St. Mary's in Waterloo, who have made Marriage Encounter. Such a transformation in them! There is a glint in their eyes, there is a love for each other now that one used to see only on wedding days, an inner joy and peace as though they had swallowed the noonday sun. And what is equally amazing is that they even began noting me— their pastor. I began to feel they no longer were taking me for granted, that they were even listening to my homilies, that they were asking what can I do to help the parish come alive. Wow! I said to myself, I must go and see this thing that has come to pass. So I went. Now I know.

On the Marriage Encounter Weekend I made, Fr. Leo Klem was the priest president of the team. The rest of the team was made up of three wonderful couples: Dee and Denny Stemmler, Lynn and Al Toth, Carolyn and John Dvorak. They told us that Marriage Encounter was a crash course in learning the technique of communication that will help couples to know and love each other more.

The key word is "encounter." Encounter just doesn't mean to meet somebody. Rather it means confronting somebody at gut-level. We can share on one of three levels: (1) mouth-to-mouth, like the chit-chat at a cocktail party, superficial sharing; (2) head-to-head, like telling what I think, or giving my ideas on a subject, a deeper level of sharing; and (3) heart-to-heart, like telling how I feel,

sharing my feelings— this is the deepest level. Encounter is confrontation on this third level. The powerful effect of the weekend came from the fact that the team couples presented the technique of encounter, not by explaining it, but by using it in their presentations. They shared with us on the gut-level. It was, as Lawrence Welk would say, "Wunderful, Wonderful."

I shall not divulge more lest I rob anyone intending to make the Marriage Encounter Weekend of the profound conversation that will come from encounter. It will be an experience not unlike that of Saul on the road to Damascus. So, priests, Sisters, couples, sign up and see for yourself!

**Business in the Diocese**

John P. Dessauer has been elected senior vice president of Security Trust Company's Trust Division. Dessauer recently rejoined Security Trust after a four-year absence, during which he headed Investment Management Groups in Upstate in New York and Europe for Citibank.

Dessauer has a BS from LeMoyne and a law degree from Cornell University. He has served on the board of directors of Project Hope, St. Bernard's Seminary, Birthright and the Association of the Blind.



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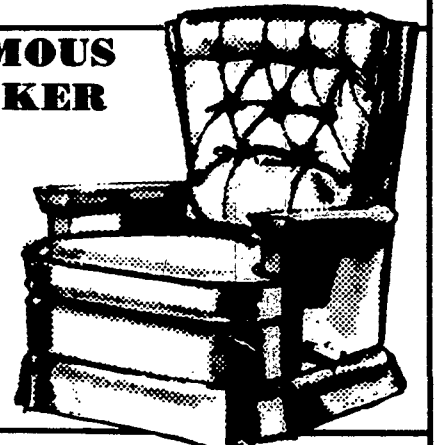
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