

Insights in Liturgy

The Preparation Rite

PART II: THE RITE

By DAVID E. NOWAK

The "Preparation of the Gifts" is a preparation of the entire community for the liturgy of the eucharist. The bread and wine are brought forward and placed on the table not as a bargain or deal made with God for what He can give us in return, but as a symbol of our relationship to the Father of all creation.

This meaning was conveyed in early Christian worship by simple gestures. Writing in Rome, about 150 A.D., Justin Martyr said:



DR. JEFFERSON

Two Talks Scheduled by Dr. Jefferson

"Where does destruction of the unborn put medicine, society and religion?"

That will be the topic addressed by Dr. Mildred F. Jefferson, president of the National Right to Life Committee, at two gatherings in Rochester on Tuesday, Oct. 18.

Dr. Jefferson will speak at 3 p.m. at the Lower Strong Auditorium and at 8 p.m. at Cardinal Mooney High School. Both lectures are open to the public at no charge.

A nationally known pro-life advocate, Dr. Jefferson is the first black woman graduate of the Harvard Medical School. She is a surgeon and associate professor of surgery at Boston University.

Cenacle Sets New Series

Scripture-for-Prayer evenings are conducted on alternate Mondays at the Cenacle, 693 East Ave.

Sisters Shirley Kitagawa and Evelyn Bailey will lead the program.

The readings of Sunday's liturgy will be considered in sessions that include time for explanation, private reflection and sharing of that reflection.

The evenings will begin at 8 and end at 9:30 p.m. Further information is available through Sisters Kitagawa and Bailey at the Cenacle, 271-8755.

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"Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought to the president of the brethren. There is no mention of prayers, processions, or special ceremonies for the gifts. Their meaning speaks eloquently simply through the gestures of bringing them up and placing them on the table.

Much later under the influence of Byzantine court ceremonial the Western rites began to surround the preparation of the gifts with litanies, prayers of unworthiness, incensations, hierarchical processions, and silken veils. But as ritual complexity increased, the sense that the gifts pointed to the relationship of covenant-love between God and His People decreased.

The original modest gestures required to prepare the table became a dramatic "offertory" isolated from the rest of the liturgy. Finally, its purpose was entirely obscured as it became dissociated from the acts of blessing and sharing of the eucharistic bread and wine with the advent of infrequent communion.

Today, although restored in the new Order of Mass, the "Preparation of the Altar and Gifts" is frequently abused in practice. Many presiders, for example, continue to foster an improper attitude towards the Preparation Rite by saying the new thanksgivings for bread and wine ("Blessed are you...") in a loud voice and to the accompaniment of dramatic elevations. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal clearly indicates that these prayers, as well as those before and during the hand-washing, are to be said "quietly" and that the paten and chalice should be raised only "slightly." Even if no song is sung at this time these prayers should not compete with the more significant eucharistic prayer in volume or tone.

Unfortunately, we are prone to conceive of the Mass as a disconnected series of distinct prayers or

rites rather than as a coherent whole. Consequently, we often fail to respect the relative importance attached to different parts. To say the thanksgiving prayers in a loud voice while raising the paten and chalice impressively distorts the place of the preparation rite in the rhythm of the liturgy of the eucharist and distracts the preparation of the faithful by diverting their attention to the presider's private preparation.

Another obstacle to the community's preparation is the choice of music. Even before Vatican II one of the major concerns of the liturgical movement was to underline the fact that the people, as well as the clergy, actually offer the eucharist in the great prayer of offering, the eucharistic prayer. Thus, the real "offertory" hymns are the acclamations of the eucharistic prayer. Nevertheless, many recent hymnals contain songs described as "offertory" songs in the style of "Lord, Accept the Gifts We Offer" and suggest they accompany the procession with the gifts.

Clearly the eucharistic prayer will not be an experience of the entire Church's offering if it is upstaged by an "offertory" thematic expressed during the Preparation Rite. The proper function of music during the preparation rite is to accompany and celebrate the communal aspects of the procession and preparation. Those texts which speak of the offering completely apart from the eucharistic prayer are always unacceptable. The song, if one is to be used at all, need not speak of bread or wine or offering.

The preparation of the gifts is not a form of bribe or appeasement "offered" to God as in the political model of an emperor receiving gifts from his people. In the Preparation Rite creation, our creative skill, in fact our very lives, are acknowledged as gift prepared for confirming and intensifying our covenant relationship to God in our thanksgiving proclamation.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Sarah Child

At a bridal luncheon given recently, for a young friend, slips of paper were passed around to all present. Each slip was imprinted with a question dealing in some form with the marital state. Guests, most of whom were matrons of long standing, were to respond with advice gleaned from their own experience.

The slip of paper handed to me dealt with the rearing of children. Not having half a day to expound on the subject I think I muttered something about trying not to stoop to the children's level, leaving the crying, the imprecations, the foot stamping for when the kids weren't home.

Since that luncheon, however, I've had additional time to think and below are a few other thoughts on the matter.

Try not to speak to the dog in a kinder tone than you do to your children. The argument that you do so because the dog never talks back is not relevant.

Do not try to impose your taste in clothes on your children nor should you criticize them for their lack of independent thinking. Your words on the subject will boomerang the next time you ask your husband what the women in his

HOEDOWN!

The patients of Monroe Community Hospital will welcome their relatives to a Western Hoedown Saturday, Oct. 15, 2 to 5 p.m. The festivities are sponsored by the hospital's recreation department, which is arranging a continuing "Families of Patients" program, Father Bruce Ammering, chaplain, reported.

office are wearing these days.

If your own early morning preference is for something highly nutritional such as brownies, butter pecan ice cream or a piece of fudge it is better not to sneak bites immediately after the balanced breakfast lecture. Wait until the school bus leaves.

Remember not to ever, ever say never to your

children. No sooner have you issued an ultimatum, decreed a decree, aimed an absolute you will be forced to retract it.

And finally try at all time to remember that you are dealing not simply with your children but the people who will become your grandchildren's parents and if you want a good image conveyed 15 years hence it is well to start working on it now.

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IF YOU CAN'T GO-GIVE!

THE HOLY FATHER'S MISSION AID TO THE ORIENTAL CHURCH

October 23rd is Mission Sunday.

A reminder that Christ meant all of us when He said: "Go ye, therefore and teach all nations." Yet few of us can. Few of us do. All of us, though, can help the Missions in the Near East. Here are some of the ways:

In the very lands where Christ was born and where His disciples taught, there are over 1,800,000 people living without homes and without hope. Some of them for more than 29 years! Just \$20 will feed a family for a month—\$25 will build a small but decent home. Only \$50 will care for a blind or deaf-mute child for a month—and \$1 will buy a refugee child hot lunches for a whole month. How much will you share?

HELP THE REFUGEES

"ADOPT" A CHILD

The recent fighting in Lebanon and throughout the Near East has left thousands of children homeless. You can "adopt" one of them for only \$14 a month—give them clothes, food, shelter, education—and what they need most—love. "Your" child will write to you. You may reply, if you wish. Christ will love you the more for loving one of His very own "little ones."

A PRIEST OR SISTER OF YOUR OWN

In the Near East, hundreds of vocations are blooming. But many young men and women may never realize their dream to walk in Christ's footsteps only because their families are poor. For just \$300 (\$12.50 a month for two years) you can help a young girl become a nun. For \$1080 (\$15 a month for six years) you can sponsor a seminarian all the way to Ordination. Now you can have a priest or Sister in your family.

THE PERFECT MEMORIAL

Many poor Catholics in the Near East do not even have a church of their own in which to worship. You can help. Where? The mountain people of Kerala, primitive farm folk who live in mud huts, desperately need to replace the ramshackle shed that now serves as a chapel. Just \$4000 will give the 185 Catholic families there a modest but adequate church—an ideal Memorial for someone you love.

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