

Part I: Presidential Style

The Eucharistic Prayer

By DAVID E. NOWAK

One of the primary concerns of the renewal of the liturgy is the active involvement of the people in every part. Their participation is obvious in the so-called "people's parts" whether they be responsive or meditative. It is less obvious and more often misunderstood when it comes to the proclamation of presidential prayers.

The participation of the people in presidential prayers, and particularly the eucharistic prayer, raises

two frequently asked pastoral questions: 1) the "presidential style" of the priest-celebrant; and 2) how ordinary people are to relate to the eucharistic prayer. This week we shall be concerned with the first.

The presiding celebrant is often under the assumption that it is his primary role at the eucharistic liturgy to stir up the participation of the congregation. However, while the celebrant may have a role in stirring the people to prayer, it is relatively modest.

Not only would that assumption project a very clerical liturgy wholly hinging on the activity of the priest, but authentic eucharist is an expression of faith already in some way formed and lived. The role of the celebrant is to invite response on the basis of what is already there in the faith of the congregation.

exhort, educate and induce celebration.

The point is, it isn't the business of the clergy to get anybody. Their responsibility at the eucharist is to preside decently and in order, and not to compensate for all manner of ministerial failures outside the church door.

"The Lord be with you", "Let us pray", "Lift up your hearts" is the language of a gentle host pointing the way for people who already know what they are doing and what they are about. If it is felt that more is required than such gentle invitation then something is wrong, not with the liturgy, but with the faith of those attending the liturgy, or with ministry outside the eucharist.

In the Catholic tradition (as opposed to convention), the liturgical celebrant is, first of all, a minister of the word, not a cultic functionary. As ministers of the word, priests are servants, sharing in the biblical tradition of prophecy and wisdom. The first priestly task is not to celebrate the liturgy, but to prepare a people fit to celebrate it. When this order is confused, the liturgy degenerates into a role cult, or is turned into a catechetical exercise.

On occasion, the eucharist is a catalyst for conversion, but it primarily forms the faith of those who already believe. Eucharist is not a tool for evangelization, but its result. A eucharistic community cannot be created just by doing eucharist.

The eucharistic liturgy is one time when everybody is present, and the temptation is to make up for lost initiative and personal frustrations. "If we don't get them at Sunday Mass, when will we get them?" And so, the simple matter of word read, prayer proclaimed, and bread and wine offered and received, becomes an opportunity to teach.

The priest who thinks he can induce celebration from anyone let inside the door has made an idol of himself and his ministry. He is expecting more of his ministry than Jesus did of his own. Faith is a gift of the Father to which Christ himself could only invite, and which could be refused.

We need to examine our assumption that everyone is ready to participate in the eucharistic liturgy. Some are not, and really do require a "vacation" from liturgical celebration for it to have meaning for them, especially, it would seem, the young at certain stages. If the eucharistic liturgy is not "speaking" to certain groups, it may not be the fault of the eucharistic liturgy. If the shape of the eucharist requires all manner of sauce and trimmings, some hard questions need to be asked about the appetites of participants.

The bread of life is an austere image. It is set in opposition to a consumer society which requires a touch of garish vulgarity in what is going to be popular. Our first responsibility is to the gospel, and that requires real attention to presiding at the liturgy in such a way that it is not just "what people want." People also hunger for the bread of life, and the first ministerial duty is to see that it is available.

The presider's first task is to be a person of faith. The liturgy becomes idolatry when "effect" takes precedence over faith. It also becomes idolatry when the priest-celebrants start thinking they are in charge of the situation.

Knights Name Judges For Oratory Contest

The grand knight of the Pope Pius XII Knights of Columbus Council, John A. Patsynski, last week announced the names of the judges for the local knights' oratorical contest.

The oratorical contest, slated this year for 1:30 p.m. on Feb. 12 at Bishop Kearney High School, is open to all high school seniors.

Judges this year are Dr. Thomas A. Bonfiglio, chief of surgical pathology at Strong Memorial Hospital; John E. Patterson, architect with the firm of Starks, Wurtzer, Patterson and Romeo; and John Dash, special projects editor of the Courier-Journal.

The first prize in the local contest is a \$50 U.S. Government Savings Bond, the second prize is a \$25 bond, according to Thomas Grosodonia, spokesman for the sponsoring council.

Awards for the last contest include a \$2,000 scholarship, a \$1,500 scholarship and a \$1,200 scholarship. The remaining finalists will each receive \$200 in bonds.

The topic for this year's competition is "Is There Really an Energy Crisis?"

Applications for entry into the contest are available by calling Grosodonia at 342-2514 or Sister Evelyn Marie at Bishop Kearney High School, 342-4000.

SOME THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

By Ed Sufewski

When you have a "visitation" or "calling hours," you permit family and friends in the presence of the viewable body to express their feelings about the deceased. This sharing experience can be important to you in your grief. When you are by yourself, you are alone with your grief. When you are with others, "one touch of sorrow makes the whole world kin." You and others should be able to express your own emotions. At the same time it is helpful for you to hear what the life of the deceased has meant to others, some of whom you may not even know. The visitation in the presence of the viewable body provides a proper setting and climate for these expressions.

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WORD FOR SUNDAY. Fr. Albert Shamon. Includes a portrait of Fr. Albert Shamon.

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt 4.12-23. (R1) 8:23-9:3. (R2) 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 17.

At Christmas the Light shone in the darkness. With ever-increasing intensity, light streaks through the Sundays of Christmastide. "Upon those in gloom a light has shone," foretold Isaiah. Matthew saw this prophecy fulfilled in Christ: "A people living in darkness, has seen a great light."

In 734 B.C. Assyria swept down on Israel like the wolf on the fold. The northernmost tribes of Israel, Zabulon and Nephtali, were slaughtered like sheep. Survivors were cruelly deported to distant Nineveh. Darkness enshrouded the land. To comfort the degraded tribes, Isaiah foretold that one day these tribes would see a great light—a light that would put to flight their present anguish, gloom and darkness. Nazareth is in Zabulon; Capernaum, in Nephtali.

Scripture refers to captivity, sin, error, ignorance as darkness; she refers to life, love, truth—the Christ—as light.

I think we would better appreciate our light (the light of faith and the Light of our world, Christ) if we truly realized how oppressive and repellent darkness can be!

Night darkness generally oppresses us but little, for it is tempered by so many artificial lights, by twinkling stars and the mellow yellow of the moon.

I really never experienced how dark darkness could be and how eerie and scary it really is until I visited Howe Caverns. When only a few hundred feet underground, the guide switched off the lights and there we were, as without eyes—totally blind! It was awesome, if not fearful.

Quite a while ago there was a terrible mine disaster in Nova Scotia's Springhill Mine, the deepest mine in North America. In deep-pit mining there's a quirk of nature called a "bump." It happens when tunneling upsets pressures deep in the ground. Without warning a section of the tunnel floor simply rises and smashes

into the ceiling. When such a happening occurred at Springhill in October 1958 seven men were trapped in a narrow passage 14,000 feet underground—nearly three miles. The miners husbanded their tiny rations and lamplights in hope of a quick rescue. But day followed day—no rescue. Then the lights burned out, and I remember the chilling feeling I had when one miner later described the darkness as "deep earth-darkness, deeper than black, a dark without promise."

Rescue finally came. When the survivors looked up at the tall blue sky and gulped the cool air, to a man they uttered one prayer: "Thank you, God, for the daylight."

Did you ever hear the story of the day the sun did not rise? Of course it's a make-believe story.

On that morning, 6 o'clock came and no sign of dawn. At noon the darkness was blacker than a hundred midnights in a cypress swamp. No birds sang. Then came the black hours of the black afternoon. Evening. Night.

That night, no one slept. Some wept, some wrung their hands in anguish. The churches were thronged with people on their knees, begging for precious light. They remained thus the whole night through. The night passed. Millions of eager tear-wet faces turned eastward. When red began to enflame the sky, shouts of joy and thanksgiving rent the air. Millions of lips, previously indifferent to prayer, now thanked God for the daylight.

Why were these people so thankful? Just because the sun rose after one day of darkness. The very constancy of God's blessings sometimes seems to dull our spirit of gratitude.

A great light has appeared in our dark, dark world—"The Light of the world" who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." But once more, behind Berlin Walls, and Iron and Bamboo Curtains, peoples again walk in darkness and sit in gloom.

We who have the Light, do we thank God each Sunday for the Light? We who have the Light, do we pray God to let His Light shine on those seated in darkness still?

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