

Part II: A Profession of Faith The Eucharistic Prayer

By DAVID E. NOWAK

Last week we raised two pastoral questions which bear on the participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass. The first concerned the "presidential style" of the priest-celebrant, and the second, the topic of this week's article, concerns how the faithful participate in the Eucharistic Prayer.

Obviously, the active ritual participation of the assembled faithful includes responding in the Introductory Dialogue, the Holy, the Memorial Acclamation, and the Great Amen; and listening attentively (not reading along) as the remaining parts of the prayer are proclaimed by the presider. But full participation of the faithful is not limited to the "people's parts." The participation of the faithful in the Eucharistic Prayer includes a personal identification with the entire act and meaning of its proclamation.

There is a widespread feeling that something is wrong with our eucharistic prayers. In some sectors, there is a continual clamor for new ones because it is felt that people cannot identify with the ones we have.

Although there are problems with our eucharistic prayers, these difficulties are not at a level which would ordinarily affect the prayer of a non-professional theologian or liturgist. More often, it seems that the problem of

identifying with the eucharistic prayer does not lie in the prayers we have, but with a distorted perception of eucharistic offering. This sense of eucharistic offering is crystallized in the formula: "We bring gifts of bread and wine to be transformed now by the action of the priest."

This view of the eucharist makes the presentation of the creaturely gifts by the people a preliminary act to the "real thing" of changing them into something else.

Although the rite can be made to fit that interpretation, I cannot help wondering what this statement says about God's creation if the whole purpose of creation is to change it into something other than what it is. I also wonder what this model says about the Church when it appears to make the people's offering a mere preliminary to a central priestly act.

We need to renew some basic perspectives. First, creation and redemption are not separate realities. The same God creates and redeems, and the same world is created and redeemed. Redemption fulfills the purpose of creation, and does not annihilate it. The Resurrection affirms that the Father affirms, accepts and is returning creation to Himself.

Second, creation is the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and as such its very structure is open to the incarnation of the Son and

the gift of the Spirit. Redemption does not "rescue" us from our creatureliness, but from the destructive power of evil which stands in creation's way of reaching fulfillment.

A third difficulty is our perception of creation as a static thing, or a field for observation. Rather, creation is a continuing event, continually revealing its sacred origin. Our basic sacramental view of the world begins with God's presence already unfolding in His creation. Our liturgical symbols reveal a God already present. He is ever God-with-us.

With these traditional perspectives in mind, our eucharistic offering becomes more than a "priest's part" embellished with our acclamations. The faithful participate in the eucharist as an affirmation of who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going. In the eucharistic prayer, the whole congregation, priest and people, "joins Christ in acknowledging the works of God and offering the sacrifice" (Gl 54).

Participation in the eucharistic prayer is not a matter of listening to or speaking a verbal formula with the right intention to achieve a certain "effect." The purpose of the eucharistic prayer is to articulate and deepen a stance on reality.

We do not make God present. He comes to us in our act of faith, and we exult in His presence, giving meaning and purpose to our lives. We can "only" give thanks as Jesus did.

Jesus is bread and wine shared in eucharistic communion. Our participation in the eucharist is the symbol of his taking possession of us and transforming us into himself. If people are bored during the eucharistic prayer, it is because we have taught them to rivet their attention on the formula rather than letting the reality speak.

Concert Series At Seminary

The Dante Society of St. Bernard's Seminary will sponsor a concert series Sunday afternoons, throughout the spring semester in the seminary's chapel. The concerts, entitled "Abendmusiken" (Evening Concerts), will be held in conjunction with the seminary's weekly Sunday Vespers service. Although concert times vary, Vespers will always begin at 5 p.m.

The "Abendmusiken" schedule is as follows: Feb. 5, 3:30 p.m.; Feb. 12, to be announced; Feb. 19, 4 p.m.; Feb. 26, 4:30 p.m.; March 19, 4:30 p.m.; and April 2, 4:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public.

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Winter Dance

Aquinas Institute's Crystal Ball will be held at Logan's Party House, Feb. 4, 6:30 p.m. Dancing will be provided by Tom Monte and his orchestra, 9-1 p.m. Price is \$10 per person and includes dinner. Reservations can be made by calling Mrs. Charles Schiano, 621-1874 or Father Donald Kuder, 254-2020. Shown above are committee members who have planned the event. From left, Mrs. L. Tomassetti, chairman; Father Edward Heidt, moderator of social committee and Mrs. Charles Schiano, ticket committee. Second row: Dr. Louis Tomassetti, co-chairman of the dance; Eugene Zimmer, president of Aquinas Parents Association and William McCarthy, director of public relations.

Seminarians Participate In 'Desert Experience'

Six Rochester seminarians are among those theology students at St. Bernard's Seminary who this month are participating in the school's annual Desert Experience.

The program is an intense, 30-day spiritual experience, aimed at helping the candidate for the priesthood to deepen his thirst for God.

Silence, solitude and concentrated prayer are features of the Desert Experience which also includes communal celebrations of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, and conferences given by members of the seminary faculty and guest speakers.

St. Bernard's was one of the first diocesan seminaries

to establish such a program. The Desert Experience is under the direction of Father William Trott, the school's spiritual director.

Rochester students in the program are Daniel J. Condon, George P. Heyman, David A. Heywood, Anthony Mugavero, Paul J. Tomasso and Kevin Morrisroe.

The seminary has requested prayers for these men.

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

Twenty years. It took Polish Catholics twenty years to build their monumental Mary Queen of Poland Church in Nowa Huta. They did it without pay, without government funds, without labor strikes. They did it without media support or interest rates or decent working conditions. They did it because it was their top priority.

While some Catholic educators in the United States continue to ridicule Noah's Ark as a "nice story", Polish architect Wojciech Pietrzyk, drawing inspiration from the Scripture truths, designed the oval church beneath an ark-shaped roof. The Cross, resembling the mast of a great ship, rises 230 feet above the street level. And the composer, who wrote the score which was performed at the first Mass, entitled it the Hymn to the Ark. The Polish Catholics do not resort to ridicule.

The Soviet government had granted a building permit in 1956 but allowed only the erection of a large wooden cross on the site. In 1960 they withdrew permission in order to build a new school for the people. Enraged, the Poles resisted and were met with

tear gas and firehoses. Only when workers left the steel plant untended and unproductive in order to stand in resistance, did the government relent. They renewed the permit. Pope Paul VI sent the foundation stone, taken from the tomb of St. Peter. Two-million pebbles were carried from Polish rivers to be set into the concrete of the church exterior, symbols of individual Polish faith. The architect, the workers and the engineer met on the site of the main altar (long before it was in place) before and after every working period to give Glory and Praise to God. And on May 15, 1977 the first Mass was celebrated.

The main nave alone holds 5,000 persons immediately surrounding the circular altar and Tabernacle. Beneath it are three chapels, the Meeting, the Resurrection and the Reconciliation. The gallery above the main nave holds choir, orchestra and additional worshippers. An incredible 8,000 people attend each of the five Sunday Masses each Sunday. The Soviet government forbade religious ceremonies in Nowa Huta but 40,000 took part in the Corpus Christi procession last year. The Soviets planned a City without God, but thousands of Poles sing a Hymn to the Ark every Sunday. And at the entrance to the church stands a dramatic statue of St. Maximilian Kolbe: "A World Without God is a World Without Humanity." To help build the Refuge of Christian Charity, a hospice for the dying planned as an addition to the church, please contact Aid to the Church in Need, PO 16025, Irvine, Cal. 92713.

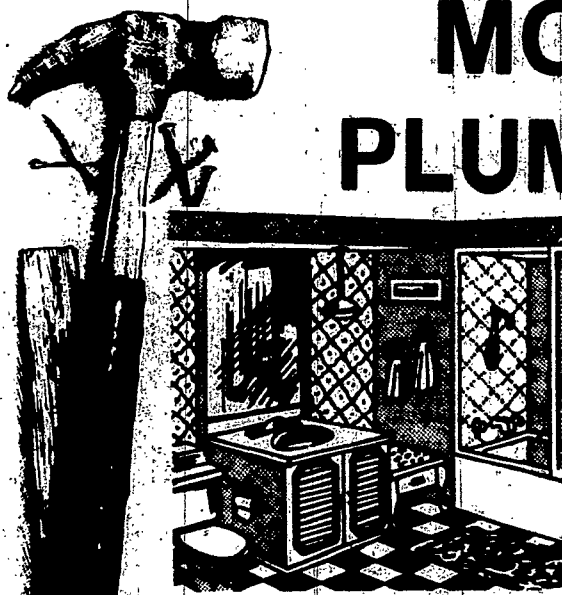
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