

From 4A

The Liturgy of the Hours has been especially well-received among the laity where it has been introduced. For the past two years, the Office of Liturgy has included sung forms of the Liturgy of the Hours with its workshops. Parishes have regularly scheduled (daily or weekly) Morning and/or Evening Prayer during Advent and Lent. Meetings of priests have also included sung forms of Midday and Evening Prayer.

In general, the sacraments have been used with pastoral sensitivity and there have been no real abuses. Specifically:

Baptism — most parishes provide preparation programs for parents of children to be baptized either as groups or in the individual homes. They are meant to test the parents' faith and readiness to foster the child's growth in Christ. While there is the option of celebrating Baptism at the parish Mass or at another time, there is not yet an adequate understanding of the importance of the community's participation in this event. Postponement is rarely out-and-out rejection, but amounts to a longer preparation time to insure the readiness of parents to accept formation in the faith of their child.

In baptizing adults, the full form of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is rarely used, primarily because most adults are already baptized Christians, but also because this Rite is not fully understood. Reception of already baptized Christians into full communion with the Catholic Church is done with sensitivity to relations with non-Catholic churches.

Confirmation — this sacrament is currently administered in the eighth or ninth grades in most parishes, and an extensive preparation program is provided. The Ordinary and his two Auxiliaries regularly confirm, with pastors confirming only in the cases of converts and emergency.

This age for conferral of Confirmation is a pastoral problem for a variety of reasons, and so a Confirmation Task Force of pastors, theologians, religious education personnel and parents was appointed in late 1975 to review the present practice and rewrite the guidelines. To date, they have

produced a position paper describing Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation and are conducting hearings about the pastoral possibilities and problems with such a position. Written guidelines are still at least a year away.

Penance — the new rite was introduced in 1975-76 with two clergy conferences, twelve regional meetings, and printed material to parish staffs and in the diocesan paper. Guidelines were issued in March 1976. Many parishes have provided the reconciliation room alternative to the confessional.

Use of the rites have been sensible, especially in the communal form. The Rite of Reconciliation for Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution has been used with special effectiveness in first Penance celebrations. Frequency of Penance is hard to assess, but there still seems to be a decline. Lack of appreciation of the sacrament and lack of a sense of sin are two major causes.

Eucharist — participation in the Eucharist is uneven, parish-to-parish and Mass-to-Mass; however, it increases more and more each year. Some parishes have reduced the number of scheduled Masses. Saturday evening Masses have been well-attended in every parish in which they have been scheduled. In addition, there are Masses for particular pastoral situations: nursing homes and residences for the aging, youth groups, Catholic school and religious education programs, home and neighborhood groups. Homily preparation is uneven, but most priests make the effort to preach from the readings. Through continuing education efforts and the work of the Office of Liturgy, a renewed emphasis is being placed on liturgical preaching.

The order of the Mass and texts are more and more appreciated as time goes by, but the texts do need refinement grammatically and poetically.

Despite some initial opposition, the use of the laity as eucharistic ministers has been most successful, enhancing the participation of the faithful and adding dignity to the celebration. Devotion to the Eucharist outside of Mass remains strong with parishes providing eucharistic days

and groups providing regular eucharistic holy hours.

Anointing of the Sick — this sacrament has been the most successful of all the revised rites. The fear of death that once accompanied this sacrament has been changed into a hopeful prayer of faith for the seriously ill. Parishes seem to have a good understanding of the value of the sacrament, and have scheduled communal anointing services that have had a powerful effect on the whole parish's understanding of faith and care for the sick. There have been some problems with exactly who should be anointed, but these have been resolved to the satisfaction of all involved.

In general during the time period covered in this report, the implementation of the liturgical rites has gone smoothly and with a fair amount of understanding. What remains is the larger task of deepening this understanding in all who participate in the liturgy. This task will be as comprehensive as the initial reform and implementation, but on a much longer timeline.

Holy Orders — The priest assigned to the promotion of priestly and religious vocations has directed a sustained effort to highlight the need for a greater response to ministerial service. His efforts touch parishes, high schools and university campuses. Most recently the vocation work is being undertaken by a team of priests and religious. The diocese is currently able to meet most of its ministerial needs but a greater number of candidates will be required in the next few years. It should be noted that in many instances the modern candidate for Orders is somewhat older and more mature than the traditional applicant of the past.

The Diocese of Rochester has been strengthened by the conferring and differentiation of the ministries. A Rite has been developed for the Installation of Lectors. There is a new seriousness and many training opportunities offered for those who read the Word of God in Liturgy. In general this ministry is shared by both men and women.

The role of Minister of the Eucharist has also been a rapidly growing ministry within the Church. Extraordinary Ministers presently distribute the Eucharist at Mass, but perhaps their strongest role has been in taking the Eucharist on a weekly basis to the sick. These ministers would be sent forth to the sick as part of the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist in a parish. Those who are members of Parish Councils are often formally installed in their role in a ceremony that is part of a parish Sunday Eucharist. In this way the basic spiritual commissioning of members of Councils and the teaching of the community in regard to their essential role in parish life are both accomplished.

Women are participating as active members of parish staffs. They are given the title of Pastoral Assistants. These roles are filled mainly by religious women. They fulfill a variety of ministries within the parish work



effectively on a team basis with the priests of the parish.

We would state that it would be desirable to have a careful examination on the role of women in the official ministries of the Church. Particularly in our society the formal recognition of the talents and the capabilities of women becomes an increasing question for the Roman Catholic Church.

Matrimony — A key event in this area was the adoption in April 1975 of "A Common Policy of Pastoral Marriage Preparation" for the Diocese. (cf. Appendix). This document set forth guidelines, the counseling goals and various pastoral and canonical considerations. Its effect has been a definite increase in the awareness of the need for adequate preparation and a strengthening of diocesan efforts to support this ministry.

COURSES — The courses take various forms including the following:

1. Four evening sessions
2. Three evening sessions
3. Two afternoon sessions
4. All-day sessions
5. One-to-one arrangements where regular sessions are impractical

The courses cover the following areas:

1. Communication in marriage
2. Finances and other practical considerations
3. Sexuality in marriage
4. Spirituality in marriage
5. Parenthood and family life
6. Preparation for the ceremony itself

Various formats and methods are used in aiding couples in discovering more about each other and discussing their attitudes about the many aspects of a life-long commitment to each other.

A special intensive program is mandated for those cases in which at least one spouse-to-be is under the age of 18. This involves a decision about readiness by a bishop's delegate based on:

1. An attitudinal questionnaire prepared by the couple
2. An interview with the parents of each fiance

To 6A



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