

Insights in Liturgy

By FATHER ROBERT J. KENNEDY

Directions For Liturgical Ministers

In their 1972 document, "Music in Catholic Worship" the American Bishops made this powerful statement: "Good celebrations foster and nourish faith, poor conditions weaken and destroy faith." (#6)

Last week we spoke of the crucial need for quality liturgical ministry in promoting good

celebrations. We could almost paraphrase the Bishop's statement to read: Good liturgical ministers foster and nourish faith, poor liturgical ministers weaken and destroy faith. Thus, they need to take responsibility for the ministry they perform, knowing that, with the Spirit's help, they are deepening the faith and prayer of the parish community.

How do liturgical ministers fulfill their role of service? Seven things are necessary.

(1) Liturgical ministers

must be in touch with the people they serve. Ministry is always people-to-people. And since ministry at the altar arises from and fosters ministry in life, ministers should try continually to understand the ways in which God is working in the parish community.

(2) Liturgical ministers should have a will to communicate, that is, a real desire to reach out and touch the hearts of those who are served. This is the desire to foster and nourish faith, and arises from our own need to have God's word touch us.

(3) Liturgical ministers must pay attention to what they are doing. Their

service fosters unity in the worshipping community, and in order for that to happen, ministers must pay attention to what their own ministry involves and pay attention to others when they are exercising their ministry.

(4) Liturgical ministers should possess an inner calmness and peace that arises from our knowledge that God has called us to be His instruments. Of course, we are all unworthy of the calls God has given us, but He finds us good enough to minister in His name. And that confidence should give us a peace to do out best.

(5) Liturgical ministers must understand that they

are helping people to pray. That will mean that they must be people of prayer themselves, being silent before the Lord, entering into His mystery and listening to Him speak.

(6) Liturgical ministers need to develop a sense of ritual. What we do in the liturgy and how we do it reveal who we are and what we mean to each other. To do this means that we stir up the deepest emotions in us: joy, gratitude, unity, repentance, generosity, commitment.

(7) Liturgical ministers should have a sense of tradition, the living tradition of faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. The celebration of this faith has taken many

forms, and continues to do so. What is essential is to understand how these forms express the life-giving paschal mystery as it is experienced by the community.

How are liturgical ministers helped in fulfilling their role of service?

We believe that the parish liturgy committee, together with the parish staff, should make it their primary task to develop this sense of ministry in those performing liturgical roles. Good liturgical ministers mean good celebrations, and good celebrations will mean a stronger, well-nourished faith.

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