

'Milestone of Liturgical Reform'

'Active Participation' Is 75 Years Old

By MSGR. WILLIAM H. SHANNON

Catholics throughout the world have a special reason for rejoicing on Nov. 22. For this date marks the 75th anniversary of Pope Pius X's "motu proprio" on Church Music. Issued Nov. 22, 1903, it was the first document of his pontificate; and in retrospect, it may be seen as one of the milestone documents in the liturgical history of the Roman Catholic Church. For in this document the Pope called for a return to "active participation" in the liturgy as the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit."

With these memorable words the Liturgical Movement in the Catholic Church was born. These words became the watchword and rallying cry of the Liturgical Movement — a movement that grew very slowly and at times very painfully in the Church. For all too many years after Pope Pius X, zeal for the promotion and renewal of the liturgy was looked upon in many quarters, both official and unofficial, with suspicion. "Worship" magazine (which began as "Orate Fratres" in 1926 and served as a kind of unofficial organ of the Liturgical Movement in the United States) was banned from many seminary libraries. Some enterprising seminarians



FATHER EHMANN



POPE PIUS X

managed to have copies smuggled into the seminary in their laundry bags! And, if I may be permitted a personal reminiscence: when I was appointed to the faculty of Nazareth College in 1945, a chancery official (who will remain nameless) asked me, with some suspicion in his voice: "Do you belong to the

Liturgy crowd?" Wanting the job, I gave an evasive answer! As a matter of fact, I did belong, having been introduced to the Liturgical Movement, as many other priests of the Rochester diocese had, by one of the foremost leaders of the Movement, Father Benedict Ehmann.

Many people in Rochester probably do not know that Father Ehmann, who now lives in very busy retirement at Holy Apostles parish, was a nationally respected liturgical leader, especially during the trying years of the 40's and 50's, when the Liturgical Movement was nothing more than a small movement in the

Church of clergy, religious and lay people, viewed with suspicion by many but united in a common concern to implement the goal of liturgical renewal that had been called for by Pius X.

The difficult years were weathered; and with the second Vatican Council the Liturgical Movement ceased to be a movement in the Church: it became a movement of the Church. Significantly the first document to issue from the Council was the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," which was promulgated in 1963, just 60 years after the "motu proprio" of Pius X. Making the goals of the Liturgical Movement their own, the Council Fathers stated:

"In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. (art. 14)

So today as we reap the rich harvest of active participation in the liturgy in the renewed life of our parish congregations, a salute to Pius X, who initiated the Liturgical Movement. A salute to all the

unsung heroes of the Movement who heard the call of Pope Pius X and rallied to its implementation, undaunted by opposition of so many who did not understand. A salute to Father Benedict Ehmann who almost singlehandedly kept the Liturgical Movement alive in the diocese of Rochester for so many years.

It has taken us 75 years — but we have come a long way since Nov. 22, 1903. Let us be glad and rejoice!

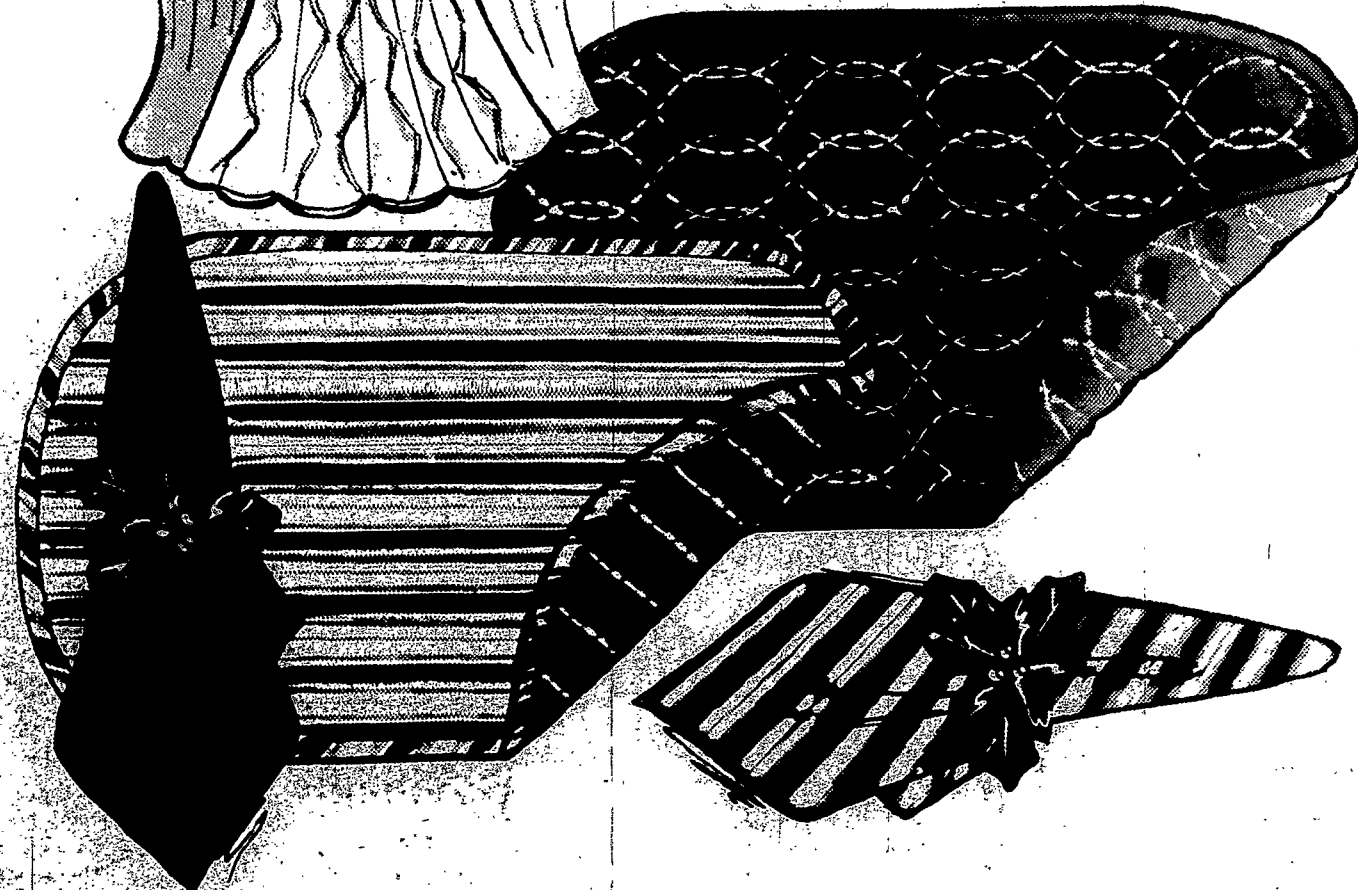
NFP Schedule

Natural Family Planning information sessions are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Dec. 4 in the Kearney Building at St. Mary's Hospital and 8 p.m. Dec. 13 at St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira. These sessions are open to the public without charge.

Two NFP classes, each limited to six couples, will be held Dec. 2 at St. Pius X, 3032 Chili Ave., and Dec. 6 at St. Joseph's Hospital. They run from 7:30 until 10 p.m.

Couples seeking instruction in the method must register with Nick and Beryl Iven at 607-594-2380, for the Southern Tier, or with the NFP office in Rochester, 716-464-8705.

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