

Insights in Liturgy

By Msgr. William A. Shannon

The Mass: Eucharist, Epiphany

The purpose of this article and the next is to explore, largely in the context of Church history, the question: Is the Mass primarily "Eucharistia" or "Epiphania"? Before discussing the question, the terms of the question need to be explained. "Eucharistia" is a Greek word which means praise and thanks offered to God. "Epiphania" is also a Greek word and means manifestation, especially God's manifestation of Himself among His people. Our question, therefore, becomes this: is the Mass primarily the action of God's people offering thanks and praise to Him or the action of God coming down among His people? In other words, is the Mass something we do or is it something we wait for God to do at the bidding of the priest?

Church history witnesses to the fact that for nearly 1,000 years the Mass was considered as the Eucharistic action of the people of God, whereby they joined themselves to the Risen Christ in praising the Father. But before the year 1,000 this understanding of the Mass was radically changed: the Mass came to be looked upon as the action of God manifesting His presence among His people at the words of consecration. It was this second understanding of the Mass that prevailed down to the 20th century. At the beginning of this century Pope Pius X initiated what was to become the liturgical movement: a movement aimed at restoring the earlier understanding of the Mass as the action of God's people. Pius X called for a return to active participation in the liturgy "as the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit."

This call was finally heard in the Church. The Second Vatican Council made it quite clear that the Mass is to be understood as the action of God's people making Eucharist to Him an action in which all are called to participate. Thus the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II says: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of liturgy and to which the Christian people have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism."

In the early centuries of the Church's life the Mass was an intimate communal experience. An early Christian Mass, say about

the year AD 200, would be a friendly gathering about a table in someone's home. The priest who presided would have dressed in ordinary street clothes. The service would have been simple and unadorned, centering around the great Prayer of Thanks (the Eucharistic Prayer) which Christ at the Last Supper had taken over from the Jewish Passover ritual and transformed by His words of consecration.

Christian people participated fully in their Mass. They contributed the loaves of bread and the wine that would be used for the Eucharistic Meal. They would receive this bread, over which the Eucharistic prayer had been said, in their hands as they stood about the altar. They also shared the cup. They were vividly conscious that Christ, the Risen One, was present among them as they gathered in community, and that with them He was offering this sacrifice to the Father. They believed that the "eucharistized" bread and wine were not ordinary bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus given and poured out for them as their food and drink.

They did not try to pinpoint the moment this change took place nor did they attempt to explain its nature. It sufficed that Christ was present among them. There was, therefore, no elevation at the words of institution. The only elevation of the sacred Bread and Wine came at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer: it signified the offering of

Christ and His people to the Father. After the Eucharistic Prayer, all present shared in the meal. Following the Meal, Communion was taken by the sick.

Even when the age of persecution came to an end and the number of Christians became so great that the Mass could no longer be celebrated in homes, the full participation of the laity was maintained. The people, say in the basilicas of Rome, were able to hear the words of the Mass spoken aloud and in their own language. They contributed the bread and wine; they sang; they answered the prayers; and in Holy Communion they received Christ under both species. The Mass in the time of Pope Gregory the Great (c 600) was a great public event, but it continued to be Eucharistia, God's people offering their praise and thanks to the Father in union with Christ their Mediator.

Between the years 600 and 1000 something happened to the Mass liturgy. Its character was radically changed. From being the Eucharistia of the people, it became the Epiphania of God. How this happened will be detailed in the next article.

Booklet Lists Legal Services

The Foundation of the Monroe County Bar has published a brochure on legal services offered in the county at little or no cost. The brochure also lists agencies that deal in counseling, referrals, mediation and arbitration. It is available at the Bar Association office, 1125 First Federal Plaza.



On Board

Sister Martha Gersbach, S.S.J, vice president and administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira, has been elected to the Nazareth College Board of Directors, according to board chairman Emmett J. Schnepf, Appellate Court justice. She replaces Sister Margaret Adelaide Owen, S.S.J, president of the board of directors at St. Joseph's Hospital, who resigned.

Presentation Brothers
 teach, live, & prayful community life of commitment & service. Located in USA and other countries.
 Free info: Br. L. Gillie FPM
 8150 Champlain Blvd., Verdun, Quebec, Canada H4H 1A5 (CJ)

BAKE 1688 CLIFFORD AVE.
KORNER near Goodman
 3 tier serves up to 100, \$35 PHONE
 4 tier serves 175 to 200, \$50 482-1133
 3 tier whipped cream, custard filling serves up to 100, \$55 We Deliver
 Decorator cakes, whipped cream & strawberry, lemon, pineapple, custard filling: 1/4 sheet, \$6.00; 1/2 sheet, \$9.00; full sheet, \$16.00.
 Decorator cakes, butter cream frostings, half sheet \$8.00, full sheet \$14

HOLY GHOST CRAFT AUCTION

TUESDAY, NOV. 20
7:30 P.M.

SPONSORED BY THE SACRED HEART SOCIETY

Auction to be Held in Holy Ghost School Hall

220 COLDWATER ROAD

For Information Call 247-3961

DANSVILLE... HINDLE FUNERAL HOME
 Ed Hindle
 335-5670 Men's Cursillo No. 33

A COMPLETE HOME IMPROVEMENT SERVICE
 15,000 CUSTOMERS CAN'T BE WRONG!
 Visit our complete kitchen & bathroom showroom - Blown cellulose insulation/roofing/siding/remodeling

FEATURING KITCHENS BY **RICH-MAID**
 McCOMBS Co., Inc. 436-9696
 FREE ESTIMATOR OUT OF TOWN CALL COLLECT
 3315 CHILI AVE.

Heat Bills Too High? YORK
 Let us show you how you can save Money with a new Heat Pump or Gas Furnace.
RG&E Recommended
Ancoma Cooling & Heating Inc.
 436-1029 Sherwin "Red" Menter Since 1949

Ford Judge's
OPEN NIGHTS AND ALL DAY SATURDAY
 for service and parts
 NEW YORK STATE'S LARGEST FORD DEALER

Anniversary
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Parrish of Christian Avenue celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary Nov. 10 at a party given by their children Rita, Joan, Robert, Jeanette, Richard and David.
 The Parrishes also have 14 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

An economy with lots of energy turns on jobs for people like Tim Young.

Twenty-year old Tim Young is beginning his career as an electronics technician in the job of Harris RF's new headquarters building in Rochester. Harris, a fast-growing manufacturer of communications and information handling equipment, recruited Tim from Monroe Community College and assigned him to their Electronic Systems Division in Melbourne, Florida.

"But after 4 months, I wanted to return to the Rochester area," says Tim, "so I was really happy when this job came along."

Without abundant power, the local economy couldn't grow at a pace to make room for skilled young people like Tim, just entering the job market.

Every year, RG&E responds to the needs of local industries like Harris RF with more electricity to make expansion possible.

Harris RF needed additional electrical capacity for their new building, and RG&E invested in additional facilities to deliver it. The building, which will eventually house about 500 administrative and engineering personnel, also frees space in older buildings for improving and expanding production capabilities to create even more new jobs for the people of this area. It's a story with a happy beginning for Tim Young.

By anticipating and providing for the increased power needs of a growing economy, RG&E is doing its part in keeping the future looking good for us all.

