

Insights in Liturgy 'Inaestimabile Donum' A Clarification

By Father
Robert J. Kennedy

In this age of instant international communication, there is a danger of misinterpretation and inaccuracy in reporting the news item at hand. This, of course, is as much a danger in normal conversation as it is in media presentations. However, it is also true that some things require more contextualization and reflection than the media are willing or able to give.

In particular, one cannot rely upon news releases entirely to understand Roman documents that address some aspect of Church life. Such stories are of necessity partial and summary. One needs the whole text of the particular document first of all, and then to understand the context out of which this document comes. Such is the case with the Instruction "Inaestimabile Donum," On Certain Norms Concerning Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, published recently by the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. (The full text was published in the June 11 issue of the Courier-Journal.)

Because of the discussion already generated by this document, it would be better to start by saying what this document is NOT.

First, it is not a new teaching; it is simply a restatement of norms that have been "on the books" since the reform documents were issued subsequent to Vatican II (see below).

Second, "Inaestimabile Donum" is not, nor should it be, read as a negative judgment of anyone's motives in implementing the reforms of the liturgy. Although the document calls attention to "abuses," most problems have arisen as a result of implementing liturgical changes too quickly and without adequate understanding. The eagerness and enthusiasm for the reform is truly a sign of the Spirit's presence in this work. Third, this document is not the final word on liturgical practice; nor should it be. Liturgy is the living expression of the faithful worship of the people, and it moves and grows with them. Fourth, this document does not close down cultural adaptation of the liturgy which is so necessary for it to be a living expression of faith.

What, then, is the context of "Inaestimabile Donum"?

First of all are the previous documents from which the text of this one is drawn: the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (1970); the Rite of Holy Communion; and Worship of the Eucharist

Outside of Mass (1973), the Instruction on the Manner of Distributing Holy Communion (1969), the Instruction on Facilitating Sacramental Eucharistic Communion in Particular Circumstances (1973), and the Third Instruction on the Correct Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1970). These documents are cited by "Inaestimabile Donum" as the context and should be carefully re-read for a fuller understanding.

Second, the context is not just the details of these various documents, but the vision and theology of the liturgy they present: liturgy that is fully participative and the conscious action of the whole assembly; liturgy that is fully ministerial, with all persons taking that role which belongs to them; liturgy that is fully the celebration of faith in the living God — in song, in carefully prayed and proclaimed Word, in gesture and movement, in silence, in environment and art.

Third, there is the positive experience of liturgical celebrations in these post-conciliar years. "Inaestimabile Donum" makes brief references to some of these. Already mentioned is the value of the active and conscious participation of all the faithful in the liturgical mysteries. There is also the enrichment offered by the cycle of scriptural readings, the growth of the communal sense of the liturgical celebrations, the relationship of the liturgy and life, and the relationship of personal prayer and devotions with the liturgy. These are enormous accomplishments for so short a time, and a nourishing experience of faith in the Christian People that cannot be turned back.

Now, it seems that this contextualization is too large for this present document; but it is necessary in order to prevent giving this document or any selected passage from it more importance than it merits. There are already, however, pieces of this document that are being misinterpreted. Some of these should be considered briefly.

Paragraph nine is being misinterpreted to eliminate Communion in the hand and eucharistic ministers. This is not true. In insisting that "it is not permitted that the faithful should themselves pick up the consecrated bread and the sacred chalice; still less they should hand them one to another" — the document insists that Communion always be shared by a

minister, whether ordinary or extraordinary. The eucharistic meal is not a buffet, but a meal of personal service, symbolized in the minister's service to the congregation.

Paragraph ten had also already been seen as eliminating lay persons from eucharistic ministry. This is not true. It has always been the position about Special Ministers of Communion that they are used when there is a need; briefly, when no ordinary minister (bishop, priests or deacon) is available or when there are not enough of them for the reverent distribution of Communion.

Paragraph twelve is being misinterpreted as eliminating Communion under both kinds. This is not true. It is simply a call to be faithful to the present discipline, which is set up at each national conference of bishops. For the United States that means twenty occasions on which Communion may be given under both kinds, including weekdays and Sundays. This is offered after careful instruction of the people.

The roles of women in the liturgical assembly, listed in paragraph eighteen, are not fully stated. Women may read the Word of God, proclaim the Prayers of the Faithful, serve as special ministers of Communion and as ushers, and fulfill all roles of musical ministry.

Paragraph twenty four does not mean that tabernacles should be placed on THE altar. The concern is that when churches are renovated to accommodate the revised liturgy the place of reservation be given due respect. This can be in a separate chapel, as the General Instruction on the Roman Missal strongly recommends, or in a place in the body of the church that is dignified, prominent and noble.

Obviously this is not an exhaustive commentary on "Inaestimabile Donum." That is not the purpose of this article. For a fuller understanding, readers are again referred to the documents listed above.

In fact, "Inaestimabile Donum" makes a strong plea at the end for continued study of the various aspects of the liturgy on the part of priests and all concerned with liturgical celebrations. This directive, above all, needs to be seriously undertaken.



New Faces

St. Ann's Home/The Heritage recently named new persons to its board of directors: (left to right) John W. O'Leary, vice president and group executive of Burroughs Corp.; Sister Jamesine Riley, superior general of the Sisters of St. Joseph; and William B. Thane, manufacturer's representative. In addition, Dr. John D. States was appointed to the medical advisory board of the institution.

St. Feehan's Rededicated In 1850 Mode

Mumford — A crowd of former parishioners and friends filled the old St. Feehan's Church June 14, for the rededication of the venerable building at its new location in the Genesee Country Museum.

The Mass was celebrated in Latin by former pastor, Father Donald J. Murphy, who observed that the congregation answered him "enthusiastically" in Latin.

The choir, under the direction of Mary Lou Ognibene, and to the accompaniment of Gertrude Amesbury at an ancient pump organ, sang parts of the Missa de Angelis in the Gregorian mode. The congregation joined in all parts.

Assisting Father Murphy were Father John Morgan, pastor of St. Columba,

Caledonia/St. Patrick, Mumford, and Msgr. Gerard Krieg, pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption, Scottsville.

Members of the congregation, Father Murphy said, "were dressed in old costumes that were authentic 1850 vintage. Everyone received Holy Communion kneeling at the altar rail." A white cloth was raised to the chin by each recipient, Father Murphy said.

The church will not house Sunday services, but it is available for weddings or religious events of a Catholic nature.

Father Murphy lauded Stuart Bolger, director of the museum, for his work in reconstructing the church, and Jack Wehle, "whose supervision was felt throughout."

CYO Names New Officers

The Catholic Youth Organization last week revealed the results of this year's organizational elections.

William F. Schmitz was named president. Schmitz is manager, audit and control, commission administration at Xerox Corp. He has been a CYO board member since 1977.

Elected vice president was Carol A. Ellis, a supervisor with Plaza Temporary Services, and also a board member since 1977.

Thomas C. Burke was named secretary. A member of the board since 1978, Burke is a member of the law firm of Lines, Wilkins, Osborne and Beck.

C. Jane Wilson, a board member since 1978, is a standards and control analyst in the data processing department of Mobile Chemical Plastics Division. She was elected treasurer.

Also elected to three year terms on the board were Maria De Jesus, Sally Saffer, Edward A. Ferguson, Jr. and Ronald E. Linzy.

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