Insights in Liturgy

By Father Benedict Ehmann

Blessings

Every Sunday in her Morning Prayer, the Church prays the Canticle of the Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace from the "Book of Daniel." From the midst of the flames this symphony was lifted to God, summoning His creatures to praise Him — light and darkness, night and day, heat and cold, frost and snow and rain, storm and lightning, mountains and hills, birds, fish and animals, and all men and women. All of these, in their kind and degree, are mirrors and instruments of the glory of God.

The Church commends them to our attention as reminders of God at every step of our earthbound journey to Him. They reveal Him. They proclaim Him. There is no person, no place, no time or season, no one of the myraid things of the universe, that stands outside the reach and touch of Jesus' redeeming grace. He used them as His lowly servants in His ministry of healing and blessing — water and oil, bread and wine, words and tears and gentle touch. And now, as He lives on in His Body the Church, He continues the same gracious ministry with the same lowly servants, the waters of Baptism, the oil of anointing, the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

So abundant is the bounty of the Lord's gift to His Church that it overflows into a long array of those lesser ordinances which we call the blessings — all of them filling up the inexhaustible treasury which the Church has in her keeping for God's People. We're blind indeed if we see the Church only as a legal institution with strict demands upon her membership. The reality of her is ever so much more wonderful. For in Jesus, her Head and Spouse, the Church is alma mater to all mankind, "flowing with delights," like the beloved in the Canticle. In the manifold blessings of the Church, it is Christ continuing to bless and consecrate, and thus to lift everything into the dynamic orbit of His amazing grace.

Time comes under her blessing. She arranges the calendar into feasts and seasons of our salvation. Each week has its Sunday, each month its holy days and feast days, each year its sesaons of Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter and Pentecost, spanning the whole course of our civil calendar with a gracious aqueduct that bears the waters of everlasting life from the pierced side of our Savior. The days, too, are consecrated with the liturgy of the hours, morning and midday prayer, evening and night prayer, which open countless hearts and lips with "psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles".

All kinds of places whereto our human affairs bring us also come under the Church's blessing, that we may never lose sight of the Burning Bush which always flames near us, and may find Jacob's Ladder pitched wherever our duties and innocent pleasures lead us. Churches, of course, but many other places as well: homes, schools, libraries, farms and barns, offices and factories, hospitals, orchards and fountains, radio and TV stations, railways and airports, cemeteries, seas and lakes and harbors, yes, and nuptial bedrooms, too. We find specific blessings for each of these, with pointed reminders of the divine Presence which is the invisible atmosphere of them all. These blessings are not intended to appease good luck, but rather to create a sacred ambience, radiate a christened fragrance, and bring a little bit of heaven to people who are sensitized by their Christian faith.

Italian Festival

La Fiera Italiana, Rochester's annual Italian Festival, will honor the Italian Catholic contribution to the community with a Mass Sunday, July 13, at 3 p.m. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate the Mass and will preach in Italian in Old St. Mary's Church. Following the Mass, the bishop and congregation will march in procession to the site of the festival on Water Street, where the bishop will bless the grounds. Once there he will join Mayor Tom Ryan, Arthur Anzlone, chairman of the festival; and Ralph Esposito, president of the County Legislature, in a ribbon-cutting ceremony

Puzzle on Page 11

PUZZLE ANSWERS FOR SUNDAY, JULY 6, 1980

I. 1. Luke 2. peace 3. satan 4. steak 5. withers 6. rest 7. her 8. shrewd 9. fresh 10. thrive 11. both 12. Tom.

Key Passages I. "The harvest is rich but the workers are few; ask the master to send help."

II. As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you; in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort. When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bodies flourish like the grass.

III. Henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear the brand marks of Jesus in my body. Brothers, may the favor of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

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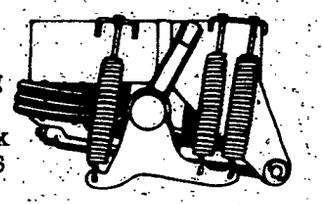
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