

Clowning Around Leads To National Recognition

By Terrance J. Brennan

There are many divisions of the priestly ministry that a man can dedicate himself to. But Father David Mura is what is commonly known among religious circles as a fool. For Christ's sake, that is. (1. Corinthians 4:10)

Some three years ago, Father Mura discovered the joys of clown ministry. Since then, he has used it to his benefit to complement his work as diocesan director of youth retreats and family camp, a position he has held since last September.

"When I first experienced clowning," Father Mura said, "something just sort of clicked inside me that made me realize that this would be a real good way to make the Scriptures come alive for the kids."

So Father Mura became first the avid student, learning and perfecting clowning techniques, and is now the knowledgeable teacher. So knowledgeable, in fact, that this year he is one of the co-directors and instructors at



Father Dave Mura as Bosco.

the third annual National Clown, Mime, Puppet and Dance Ministry Workshops at Loyola University in New Orleans (July 27 - Aug. 2) and at Ithaca College (Aug. 10-16).

The workshop is titled, "The Humor and Humanity of Jesus Christ: King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Clown of Clowns." During this three-hour long workshop, Father takes his audience on a scriptural journey with the

human Jesus and includes instruction on clown make-up, all the while gradually changing from himself to "Bosco" (his clown name, after St. John Bosco who worked with children in Italy many, many years ago), and ending the session with Mass.

"I refer to the human Jesus," Father Mura said, "because once we figure out how to look at the human aspects of the Lord, then we can look at and appreciate the divine Jesus."

"A big reason I'm going to New Orleans is that there are very few priests across the country that are interested that can sufficiently carry across the liturgy," Father Mura said. "Plus, the workshops are pulling a lot more people together that we didn't even know existed."

He also pointed out that there will be added emphasis in Ithaca directed toward the ministry to the deaf.

Father Mura admitted that,



Father Mura, alias Bosco, stands before the altar with one of his favorite props, an autographed sketch of Jesus Christ.

unfortunately, he can only devote about five per cent of his time to the clown ministry. But when he does, it's quite an experience for those who witness.

Interestingly, the priest refuses to do "his thing" for an audience made up solely of adults. His ideal audience ranges in age from 1 to 100.

"The mixed age group is the one I most enjoy doing," Father said. "Then the kids might pick up on something the adults will miss, and vice versa."

Also as a part of his clown ministry, Father Mura leads a local contingent of some 110 teenagers and college students, members of a

nationwide group called "The Holy Fools."

The youth group dresses in clown fashion and ministers one-to-one in hospitals or nursing homes or "wherever it's important to bring happiness and love to the sick and aged and lonely and forgotten," Father Mura added.

Insights in Liturgy

The Role Of Folk Groups

By Susan K. Roll

In the beginning was the guitar, and the guitar was the Folk Group; and the guitar, was the Folk Group. Everything that existed in the beginning (at least in terms of the Folk Group) existed through the guitar, and nothing came to be without it. Not even classical guitar, mind you, but ten basic chords that covered the ten basic "folk mass songs."

Now, 15 years later, we find that repertoire, instrumental resources, and pastoral, musical, spiritual and other expectations have grown tremendously — and along with all of these, fortunately, most parish folk groups. The sheer novelty of a "folk mass" has long since worn off; the

simplicity of the conventional repertoire, both musically and lyrically, vastly underestimated (and probably undercut) the more sophisticated needs of most worshipping communities.

In sharp contrast to its uneven beginnings, the overriding contemporary advantage of what can be labeled (loosely) liturgical folk music is its flexibility, progressiveness and potential to respond both to the general direction of growth in the Church, and to the shifting needs of a particular worshipping community. Folk by definition is "people music," and possible resources for people-music include not only folk music leftovers from the 60s, but also traditional folk hymns (Amazing Grace, Morning Has Broken — yes, it was written 100 years before Cat Stevens!); new folk-liturgical music published through religious music companies such as North

American Liturgy Resources, G.I.A., F.E.L., World Library, and a crowd of smaller companies (after a lull in the mid-70s, there's more and more good new material being published); popular songs (rock, jazz, country — but see caution at the end of this paragraph). Other sources might include songs from different American cultures (e.g., Black, Hispanic, Indian, Shaker); non-American folk music (e.g., Italian, Irish, German, Polish — for instance, Willard Jabusch's "Songs of Good News" uses an Israeli folk tune); and above all, whatever resources you may be gifted with in your own parish — perhaps people who are competent at composing, arranging, or writing words, even on a relatively simple level. (A good place to start is with a responsorial psalm, composing an easy-to-learn congregational refrain, and verses for a cantor.) Needless to say, however, any material you choose from whatever

genre will have to be subjected to absolutely ruthless judgment concerning its musical (is it really worthwhile or just popular?), and pastoral (does it help these particular people express their authentic faith here, now, in this culture?) value.

And as mentioned before, there's plenty of room for instrumental creativity. Ever try a hymn accompaniment using guitars to play rhythm while an alto flute carries the melody line? Or a meditation song by a solo French horn — from the back of the church? Again, be ruthless in evaluating for good taste.

A folk group leader or participant can stimulate his/her own creative juices with a trip to (yes, this is a plug!) the Liturgy Office — call and make an appointment to talk to someone about your particular situation, or just to prow through the library for planning resources, new music, upgrading musicianship (try the Miracle Seven-Minute. Fingerpicking

Course to relieve stale guitar technique), as well as for deepening your own understanding of the structure and flow of liturgy.

Spirituality and pastoral awareness are becoming (and most certainly should be) hallmarks of a parish folk group in 1980. More groups are seeing the need to pray together, in order to increase their collective awareness both of the spiritual needs of their congregation, and how music can and must shape communal prayer.

formance (or a campfire sing-along, for that matter!). Folk musicians are no less ministers than those in any other liturgical ministerial role; and they bear a similar, extremely serious responsibility to work toward opening clear channels to the presence of God among his people.

(Susan K. Roll is a Catholic Campus Minister at Ithaca College and is a Summer Intern in the Office of Liturgy.)

Blood Mobile

The Red Cross Bloodmobile will be stationed at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on Tuesday, July 29, from 3 to 7 p.m. Red Cross officials are presently campaigning for blood donors during this, a traditional time when blood supplies run low and demand becomes high.

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