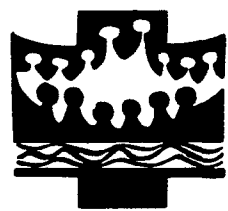


Insights
In Liturgy

By Father Thomas Nellis



**Incensation
And Washing**

In the furnishing of a home certain objects are included because they seem essential to the smooth functioning of a 20th century household. Other objects, perhaps equally valued by the homeowner, are there primarily for the purpose of giving a certain character or elegance to the dwelling. In a similar manner certain elements of our Mass are there, not because they are part of its essential structure, but because they are thought to add a certain grace or poetry to the sturdy prose of the Roman liturgy. Such is the case, I think, with the incensation and washing of hands during the preparation of the gifts.

"The gifts of the altar and the altar itself may be incensed. This is a symbol of the Church's offering and prayer going up to God. Afterward the deacon or other minister may incense the priest and the people." (51. General Instruction) The incensation, formerly obligatory at all solemn Masses, is now optional at every Mass. In many American parishes this ritual is used only for funerals and very special liturgical occasions. Three reasons for this restraint might be: 1. a desire not to obscure the more essential elements of the Mass with what is rightly considered a secondary ritual; 2. a sense that many people do not understand the intended symbolism in the use of incense and that, therefore, it does not conform to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy's dictum that "rites normally should not require much explanation" (No. 34); and 3. a realization that for some the odor of incense may be physically irritating, aggravating an asthmatic or allergic condition.

On the other hand, such use of ritual action, here involving the senses of sight and smell, adds richness to a liturgy that tends to be

excessively verbal and didactic. Once understood, the incensation of the gifts is a powerful way of saying, "Lord, consecrate these gifts and our lives to your service. May they become a pleasing sacrifice in your presence."

"The priest washes his hands as an expression of his desire for inward purification." (No. 52. General Instruction) Washing one's hands as a sign of inner purity was customary in both Judaism and early Christianity. The original purpose of this gesture within the liturgy was probably not for the purposes of physical cleanliness after handling the people's gifts and/or incense, but as a symbol of the interior purity required before entering into the Eucharistic Prayer, the Holy of Holies of the Mass.

At first no prayer accompanied the action, but gradually various formulas were added. The Tridentine Mass made use of Psalm 26:6-12. "I wash my hands among the innocent and walk around your altar, O Lord." Today the washing of hands is accompanied by one verse from Psalm 51, said quietly by the priest: "Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin." This verse is suggested for use by the priest to help him "exercise his ministry with attention and devotion" (No. 13. General Instruction); i.e., to remind him that this ablution is not primarily a utilitarian act, but a symbolic one. The washing itself is a prayer.

The congregation is not directly involved in this ritual. But seeing their prayer leader asking God for cleansing, they are reminded of the awesomeness of the mystery soon to be celebrated and their own need for "humble and contrite hearts" (Daniel 3:39). The washing is more likely to achieve its ritual purpose if it is enacted with a certain "largess," using a good-sized pitcher, bowl and towel, and washing the whole hand rather than just the fingertips.



Machine Donated

Margaret McDermott, RN, of the St. James Mercy Hospital maternity unit, with a new cardiac respiratory monitor that has been donated by the hospital's Women's Board. The machine cost \$6,681, and is used to monitor the heart rate, respiration, blood pressure and temperature of high-risk babies.

**Corpus Christi Mission
To Focus on Non-Violence**

"Christian Non-Violence: The Great Failure, the Only Hope" is the theme of the Corpus Christi Parish Lenten mission Feb. 18-20.

Father Charles McCarthy, founder and former director of the Center for the Study of Christian Non-Violence at the University of Notre Dame, and director of the Agape Center for the Study and Practice of Christian Non-Violence in Brockton, Mass., will lead the event.

An Eastern Rite priest, Father McCarthy is married and the father of 10. He holds degrees in philosophy, English, theology, education and law.

Program hours are 7:30-10

p.m., Friday, Feb. 18; 9 a.m.-9 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19; 1-4 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 20. A pot-luck dinner will be served Saturday evening for the program participants, and snacks for break times will be furnished. The parish will provide free child care Saturday and Sunday, but reservations are required and are made by calling the parish child care center, 546-8787. The mission is open to interested adults. A \$10 fee is charged for the program and participants are expected to attend the entire weekend.

Registration is required by calling the parish rectory by Ash Wednesday, Feb. 16, 325-2424. Housing cannot be provided for out-of-town participants.

The mission is sponsored by the parish and is co-sponsored by both the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy.

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**Brighton Church Sets
Renewal Program**

An eight-day "Personal Renewal Experience," intended to help individuals and families enrich and deepen their Catholic faith, is scheduled from Feb. 20-27 at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Brighton.

Designed by parishioners, the theme of the program will be "Light Up Your Life," and that phrase will be the first part of each day's program. The schedule:

Sunday, Feb. 20, "Light Up Your Life through Renewal." Monday, "through Christ's Way." Tuesday, "through His Word." Wednesday, "through Prayer." Thursday, "through Reconciliation." Friday, "through Christ." Saturday, "through Commitment." Sunday, "through Celebration."

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be guest speaker at the closing service Feb. 27, on

the topic "The Renewed Christian."

Most of the talks during the week will be led by three representatives of the Ministries Center for the Laity, Brooklyn — Father William Burkert, Sister Maria Lauren and Brother Paul Michelenko.

The first service will be at 7 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 20. From Monday through Friday, the schedule will generally be a talk and service at 10:30 a.m.; either Mass or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at 7 p.m. and a repeat of the morning talk at 7:30.

Co-chairmen are E. James Hickey and Raymond E. Naber Jr. Pastor is Father John L. O'Connor.

**CDA Unit
Publishes
Calendar**

The Court Our Lady of the Cenacle 1139 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas last week issued a calendar of activities.

Officer David Valle will speak and Ann Conley will chair the next meeting, 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 15, at St. Philip Neri hall.

The club will host its annual Valentine's Day party for children of the area developmental center Feb. 17. Rose Hendrickson is chairman of the event and club members are asked to donate baked goods.

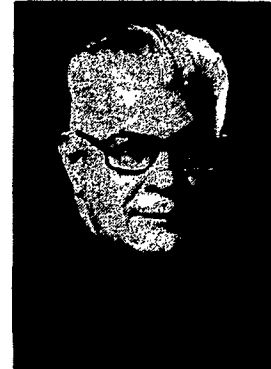
An evening of recollection, with dinner served, will begin at 6 p.m., Wednesday, March 2, at the Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal. Members interested in attending are asked to call Rose Wolf, 482-4233.

NFP Class

A Natural Family Planning class will begin Monday, Feb. 21, at St. Anne's Church, 1600 Mt. Hope Ave. Enrollment is limited and pre-registration is required. Further information is available by calling NFP Education of Rochester, 464-8705.

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