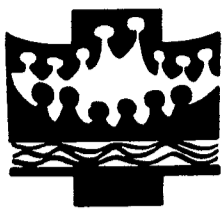


Insights  
In Liturgy



By Gretchen F. Dent

The Sign  
Of Peace

In the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy we become one with Christ through Word in the praying of the Eucharistic Prayer. But before we actively unite ourselves with Christ through the sharing of the one bread, we need to become one with each other by extending ourselves to those near us as a sign of our sincere desire for reconciliation, unity and peace. This opportunity is given to us during the communion rite as we turn to those near us and exchange a gesture of peace: the Sign of Peace.

Historically, the sign of peace has been a part of the liturgy since the earliest times. The risen Lord's greeting, "Peace be with you," was his first gift to the Apostolic Church, and the early Church gathered with a deep desire for that peace. Its placement in the liturgical celebration, as well as its style has changed throughout the centuries. In earliest sources, however, it appears to have been shared in much the same manner as it is today. During the intervening years the greeting of peace became more and more clericalized, until only the presider and deacon exchanged the greeting. The liturgical reforms of Vatican II restored the original concept of this rite, which as we have learned included the sharing of this greeting among all those gathered.

The sign of peace consists of three parts: the presider's prayer for peace; the presider's wish for peace in the community together with their response; and the sharing of the gesture of peace among the members of the assembly.

The rite is what its name implies, a "sign" of the peace of Christ — a peace that the world alone cannot give, but which comes only through Christ Jesus. It is not merely a greeting or a time of sociability, but a true gesture of desiring Christ's peace for one another.

It is not necessary, or advisable, to attempt to

share this gesture with everyone present at Sunday celebration or large gatherings, nor is it the time to move about to greet friends. The time for hospitality and greeting of friends occurs before the celebration begins, or at a coffee hour or informal gathering after the celebration. It is a "sign" of what we truly desire for everyone present, thus it need only be shared with those in the immediate area. The presider, as well, need only share this sign with those near him as he has already addressed the entire assembly in his greeting. A presider who travels throughout the assembly greeting individuals diminishes the sign value of the greeting of peace and accentuates the role of presider, both of which are counter to the understanding that Christ is present in the whole assembly.

Those offering the sign of peace need to make an effort to be truly present to those with whom it is shared. The simple words, "The peace of Christ be with you," or a similar phrase, combined with a warm handclasp or embrace which includes eye contact should convey that presence.

The time taken to extend the sign of peace among the assembled should be in proportion to the other elements of the communion rite. Length, musical accompaniment, etc., should not exaggerate this particular part of the rite.

There is a challenge to making this sign what it is intended to be — a challenge to unite the assembly as one before they share the one bread and become one with Christ.

"The challenge is to make the sign of peace both genuine and reverent. It is not a mere greeting. It is a form or worship and prayer — a personal and sincere pledge and sign of reconciliation, unity and peace. It is a manifestation of faith in the presence of one's neighbor: a prayer that God may bless him/her. It is the opportunity to see one another afresh in God and to be reconciled in the way that only liturgy affords." (The Sign of Peace, Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, 1977, USCC)

MOVIES

'Flight of the Eagle' Tale of Tragedy

By Michael Gallagher  
New York (NC) — Jan Troell, the great Swedish director who nearly a decade ago brought us "The Emigrants" and its sequel "The New Land," has in "The Flight of the Eagle" (Summit) turned once more to the themes of daring the unknown and of heroic endurance in the face of crushing hardship. The period, too, is the same, the 19th century — though some 40 years later, close to the turn of the century.

"The Flight of the Eagle," however, is a quite different film otherwise. It's based upon an actual event, a quixotic and ill-fated attempt to reach the North Pole by taking off, in a hydrogen balloon, from Spitsbergen, an island group north of Norway.

The hero and heroine of "The Emigrants" and "The New Land," the peasant couple played so memorably by Max Von Sydow and Liv Ullmann, had no choice but to embark upon their adventure. The endemic rural poverty of their native land shut off all hope for a better life for themselves and their children.

The balloonists, on the other hand, were comfortably fixed members of the middle class. What they did was breathtakingly foolish — as only strong, self-sufficient men eager for glory can be foolish — but such is the power of Troell's craft that they, too, like the peasant couple, lay claim in the end to our sympathy, and the tragedy that overcomes them stirs pity and fear.

Their leader was S. A. Andree (Max Von Sydow), an eccentric, middle-aged bachelor who lived with his mother. He was a scientist, a mystic and an "aeronaut," though in fact his practical experience with balloon flight was woefully limited. What he did have was a vision and the charisma of leadership, gifts that turned out to be fatal not only for himself but for his two companions, Nils Strindberg (Goran Stangertz)

Author's Query

In view of the projected adoption by Rochester of Cork, Ireland, as another twin-city, I am engaged in graduate research on Irish-born immigrants who have settled in metropolitan Rochester since 1940. My research will involve a questionnaire and probably an eventual interview. I would invite any interested Irish Rochesterians to please contact me promptly: Richard Galvin, 23 Limetrees Road, Maryborough EST, Douglas, Cork, Ireland.

and Knut Fraenkel (Sverre Anker Ousdal).

Working from a screenplay by himself, George Oddner, Ian Rakoff, and Klaus Rifbjerg (and based on a novel by Per Olof Sundman), Troell builds slowly as is his way, a meditative style of filmmaking that is quite far removed from American razzle-dazzle.

The film opens with an attempt the previous year that had to be called off because of adverse winds. Next we see Fraenkel, eager to replace the man who dropped out, working to impress Andree with his strength during a gymnasium scene played without dialogue.

Then Troell follows the trio to Paris where they watch the construction of a new and bigger balloon (made possible by a donation from Alfred Nobel), model for their images at Madame Tussaud's waxworks, and take in the can-can, which particularly delights Fraenkel. All the while the three are made much of by royalty and high society at home and abroad.

But the prelude comes to an end one squalid, rainy morning in June in bleak Spitsbergen when the advent

of a favorable wind makes possible their takeoff, and so the die is cast.

Beset by one mishap after another, they're forced to come down after three days on the frozen Arctic Ocean.

The incomparable Max Von Sydow gives a superb and nuanced performance as the complex Andree, and Stangertz and Ousdal are flawless in support.

The somber nature of the story and the deliberate pace will rule out younger viewers and might put off some older ones too, but otherwise this compelling and visually enthralling Swedish picture deserves a wide and appreciative audience. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-II — adults and adolescents, and has recommended it.

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The general public is invited to the sessions which will explore Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

The guild promotes devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. But the study group will cover messages given at more recent apparitions.



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