

CROSSROADS II

RENEWED HEARTS RENEWED CHURCH

Holy Year and Holy Things

By Father Robert F. McNamara
 In one of his parish homilies on the present Holy Year, Pope John Paul reminded the Roman parishioners, "The Christian community should be distinguished by a deep desire for holiness and also a particular veneration for what is holy." He made this more concrete by saying that veneration especially implied: a) respectful behavior, and b) respectable language.

A jubilee year that commemorates, as the present one does, the holiest of mysteries -- God becoming man to redeem us -- is an ideal time for us to ask ourselves whether we are careful or careless in our behavior or speech when dealing with sacred things. It is all too easy to slip into carelessness, especially if those with whom we associate happen to be careless.

What does the pope mean by irreverent behavior? He gives one illustration -- lack of respect in sacred places, particularly in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

The point is well taken. Have you noticed that in this country people have become less quiet in church over the past 20 years? Of course, the revised liturgy is partly accountable for this. The sign of peace requires that we converse; and applause is practically required at certain Masses, as, for instance, an ordination ceremony. But haven't we gone a little too far? There always used to be a couple of devout old ladies in every parish who stopped to chat in church after Mass. Their voices were audible all over the church; but to give them credit, technically they were whispering -- a sign of reverence. Today, however, in some churches the conversation at the end of Mass can only be called "chatter." How much better if the people should

go outside to visit, or at least into the vestibule, and how much more considerate it would be of those who have remained to say some private prayers. I would not accuse the loud talkers of intentional irreverence, only of insufficient thoughtfulness. Quiet in church still remains the ideal.

Are we irreverent, too, when we enter church? Do we still bless ourselves with holy water and genuflect towards the Blessed Sacrament before we go into the pew? Do parents train their children to do the same thing? If the next generation grows up careless about reverence in church, it will be largely because their fathers and mothers have not taught them the "rules of etiquette" towards God.

Finally, regarding behavior, are we sufficiently reverent when we receive Holy Communion? The moments of Eucharistic Communion are precious gifts of God. Whether we receive the host upon the tongue or in the hands, whether we receive the host alone or from the chalice, too, may we do so with the greatest respect and care. Then we will make real what we have just declared, "Lord, I am not worthy." And others will be touched by our seamliness.

What, next, about reverence of language? The Holy Father again gave one illustration of an improper manner of expressing oneself -- misuse of the names of saints. Now, he was addressing an Italian audience, and in Italy there is a tendency to abuse the names of the saints. The same abuse is not current here; but the abuse of the name of God himself seems to be increasing among Americans daily (especially on television). I am speaking especially of the exclamations "God!" or "My God!" This is not a false oath or vow, but it is not taking the name of God "in

vain," which the second commandment includes. A serious sin, no; but a definite disrespect.

Even more shocking is the increase among Americans using coarse or obscene language. As Erma Bombeck said in a recent column, "This country is becoming bilingual: English and Profanity are spoken fluently by children and adults alike." Erma confesses she is a prude in these matters. "A prude who is still shocked when a television show in prime time uses words I used to get my mouth washed out for using." The trouble is, she says, that "profanity is a lot like smoke. Being around it is just as bad as using it yourself." It is a "catching" disease, too. Dirty talk is not only uncouth, it is irreverent. It degrades a beautiful creation of God -- sex; and it shows disrespect for the dignity and sense of decency of those in whose presence we use it.

As we reflect on the pope's words about respectable expression, does "the shoe fit?" If he is fingering us, why not try to turn over a new leaf this Jubilee year? Wash out your mouths, and clean-mouth it ever after. (Ivory Soap is still good.)

Cardinal Newman has a thought to offer us on the general subject of respect for what is holy: "To believe in God is to believe the being and presence of one who is all-holy, and all-powerful, and all-gracious; how can a man really believe this of Him, and yet make free with Him? It is almost a contradiction in terms. Hence even heathen religions have ever considered faith and reverence identical."

"You can tell a tree by its fruits," said Jesus. If our faith is true, it should show in the reverence of our actions and the reverence of our speech.

Insights In Liturgy



By Gretchen Dent

Share The Living Water

The elect in parishes throughout the diocese have celebrated the first of three Scrutinies this week. Despite their ominous sounding title, the Scrutinies are "intended to purify the catechumens' minds and hearts, to strengthen them against temptation, to purify their intentions and to make firm their de-

cision" (RCIA #154). The Scrutinies should be celebrated with the elect and the community gathered together so that the elect may be supported and strengthened by the community during this period of intense preparation for initiation and/or reception into the Church. The Gospel of the Samaritan Woman is the focus of the First Scrutiny.

For Jews during Jesus' time, living water meant flowing, running water as was found in streams and bubbling springs, and was much preferred to stag-

nant pools of water. Today, running water still brings vivid images to mind: the babbling of a gentle brook meandering through a meadow; the taste of clear, cold spring water bubbling up in the woods; the relentless breaking of waves upon the sand; the sound and smell of a gentle spring rain...it speaks to us of refreshment and cleansing, of life, healing and hope.

Physical water, however, is not always accessible to us. We cannot always rest by that peaceful stream, drink that cool glass of water or be cleansed in fresh water. But Jesus speaks to us of a living water which will be with us always. He offers us water which will quench our thirst forever, bring us peace and raise us to new life. As baptized Christians, we have cons-

tant access to that fountain of living water -- the life of Christ bubbling up within us. Living water, given to us in Baptism, that can quench the deepest thirst within. We carry it with us -- always ready to well up. It refreshes and strengthens us. The more we allow it to quench our thirst, the more it wells up.

The catechumens stand in the midst of the community asking for a share of that water. They are reaching out for the living water of Christ. We, as community, need to reach out to them in support -- offering them a drink from our own pool. They need to see that spring of living water bubbling up in each of us.

As baptized Christians, however, we don't always avail ourselves of that liv-

ing water. We get caught up in the daily needs of our lives and find ourselves looking into wells of pleasure and success for our refreshment. We wander into the desert and become parched and unable to quench our thirst. Lent provides us, as community, with an opportunity to return from our wandering, to look within ourselves and to recall our baptismal promises. The faith of the catechumens in our midst should give us the inspiration to closely scrutinize our own lives, just as they will be doing, and once again to find new life from the fountain of living water.

We are invited, like the woman at the well, not only to receive, but to give. We need to reach out, to share that living

water, to offer a drink to all who are thirsty. The water is offered generously as gift, with no return expected. Whether or not it is accepted, we need to offer it -- as Christ offers it -- to all who are thirsty. For Christ is present in all those in need and our response is eventually directed back to Him who generously gave us the living water. It is the ripple effect -- ever moving, ever living, ever refreshing, ever replenishing -- ever responding.

The catechumens help us, as community, to see the need for returning to the fountain in our own lives. In turn, refreshed by the living water, we reach out to them with support and invite them to share in the fountain of living water as together we journey toward Easter.

Liturgy Office Offers Leadership Training

The diocesan Liturgy Office will offer a new program to area churches April 6 and 7.

The program is designed to train lay leaders who will subsequently offer the introductory lector formation

program in their own parishes.

Background material, a model program and suggestions for presentation techniques will be addressed in this initial program. Follow-up meetings with participants will be arranged,

as well as on-site evaluations.

Participants are required to attend an introductory lector formation program presently being offered by the Liturgy Office before registering for leadership training.

Also, letters of recommendation from their parish liturgy committees and their pastors are to be sent to the Liturgy Office before the program takes place.

The program is scheduled for 7-10 p.m., Friday, April 6, and 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, April 7 at the Sisters of St. Joseph Retreat Center, 4141 East Ave.

Participants are asked to bring a brown-bag lunch on Saturday. Beverages will be provided.

Registration fee for the program is \$5 per person. Registration to 10 parishes, and must be completed before April 6.

Further information is available from the Liturgy Office, (716) 328-3210.

'Marketplace Ministry' Workshops Scheduled

Three workshops/retreats on "Marketplace Ministries" are scheduled from Thursday through Sunday, on April 12-15, July 19-22, and Sept. 27-30, at the Guelph Centre of Spirituality, Loyola House in Guelph, Ontario.

According to a press release from Loyola House, the seminars are "for all lay persons who desire to deepen their calling as lay persons in the ordinary circumstances of life."

Leading the workshops is John P. Milan, a member of

the Loyola House staff and professional social worker, and a former lecturer at St. Louis University. He is also consultant to various lay and religious communities in North America.

Cost of the workshops is \$95 (Canadian) per person. Three or more persons from one organization may attend for \$75 each.

For applications or more information, contact Loyola House, Box 245, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, N1H 6J9; or call (519) 824-1250.

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The Journey

April	Time	Location	Activity
1	1:00 p.m.	Monroe Developmental Ctr.	Visitation
2	7:30 p.m.	St. John of Rochester, Fairport (Northeast Region)	EVENING PRAYER
3	7:30 p.m.	St. Mary's, Bath (Steuben Region)	EVENING PRAYER
6-8			N.Y.S. Bishops Meeting

Reading: "Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." Ephesians 5:14.

Reflection: Light and darkness become the predominant themes of this fourth week. The first book of Samuel recounts how David was chosen and anointed king -- a light to the nation. Paul writes that "there was a time when you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." John recounts the cure of the man born blind. There are those who contend that the Gospel of today is a microcosm of the RCIA process.

What is the experience of blindness? How can we be blinded? (By our selfishness? By our defensiveness? By our unwillingness to bend? By our conceit?) This week's readings ask some important questions. Questions which demand a person stop and consider the direction in which he or she is moving -- and why.