

eration

this potential is not only naive, but we can help call each other forth — doing since the beginning — to be ed, responsible and just people we eing. If the actions of the liturgy are or the sermons sometimes meander— still leave church with melodies and ragement and challenge echoing in is not enough to leave people with and self-serving Scripture quotes text. What does "Praise the name of to do with the challenge of the Gos- ord really like to be praised and en- ing to? Doesn't it make more sense ether with the Lord, always present, ingness to live out our baptismal

of "liturgy" that I appreciate most Thomas Merton many years ago. action in which people express who ho they wish to become." If we are s definition of liturgy seriously, then sic would have to speak about the h to become" — the commitments e intend to live out.



Liturgy and litigation may define Repp's legacy

By Teresa A. Parsons
Associate editor

Ray Repp has been "playing the game" of lawsuits and countersuits long enough to sound like a lawyer when he wants to.

Litigation is an unexpected sideline for the 46-year-old composer and musician credited with helping to introduce "folk" music into the church's liturgy. But Repp's name is almost as widely known in some circles for the legal controversies in which he's been involved as for his liturgical contributions.

Most recently, a U.S. District Court in Chicago ordered Repp's former music publisher, F.E.L. Publications, to pay him an estimated \$30,000 in back royalties and to reassign to him copyrights for folk songs Repp wrote in the 1960s.

The publishing company then asked the court to stay an injunction ordering it to stop accepting money from parishes for the use of Repp's songs. The stay was denied in early December, according to Bob Jambor, Repp's attorney. However, F.E.L. is appealing the reassignment of copyrights to Repp.

The action is one in a long series of suits and countersuits involving Repp and F.E.L., as well as the Archdiocese of Chicago.

In the latter instance, the publisher brought a multi-million-dollar suit against the archdiocese in 1976, claiming that Chicago parishes were reproducing F.E.L.-copyright songs without permission. "My music was probably 95 percent" of the songs involved, Repp said, so "a lot of people assumed that Ray Repp was pursuing the lawsuit."

On the contrary, Repp has never been sure where his sympathies lie. "I had a hard time taking sides, even though my music was at the center of it," he explained. "F.E.L. was claiming to sue on behalf of these poor composers and musicians, but I had nothing to say about the suit ... and I doubt I would ever collect a penny."

"The one good thing" about the Chicago lawsuit, he added, "was that it raised the consciousness of people" about the rights of church musicians to protect and be paid for their work.

Ironically, the material for which Repp is best known and over which he has battled with his former publisher has never intended for church use. Written largely as personal expressions of Repp's experiences with the civil rights movement, such songs and music as "Hear, O Lord," "Allelu!" and the "Mass for Young Americans" were the vanguard of guitar or "folk" compositions that wrought revolutionary changes in church music.

Yet while the folk music "revolution" was going on, "I was still doing Gregorian chant and other kinds of traditional music in my parish," Repp recalled. "A vast number of people across the country were using my material in church before I was."

The enormous appeal of Repp's music came home to him at a liturgical conference during the late '60s. "I walked into a conference hall with 20,000 people all singing 'Allelu!'," he remarked. "I was moved to tears — I had no idea how all these people knew my song."

Repp's eyes may still grow misty if he hears his older music in a liturgical setting — but nowadays his tears are more likely to be produced by frustration. "It wasn't that the music was that good — no — but that it was appropriate for the time ... Now it's 1989, and I can't believe people are still using that stuff," he said. "It saddens me (because) there are so many other forms of expression that are far more insightful and expressive."

He also questions the church's commitment to the values that inspired his early material. "Those songs came out of a concern for civil rights, for building up the family and people's basic dignity," he said. "That's certainly part of our church's tradition on paper, especially when you read the social encyclicals ... But when you look at what's coming out of Rome in recent weeks and months, you have to wonder if that really is our tradition."

"I'm proud to be a Catholic — more so now than ever," he added. "But we have done and continue to do terrible things."

Among the "terrible things" that for a time drove Repp from active participation in the church was the

"betrayal" he perceived in *Humanae Vitae*, which he regards as "one of the most sinful things the church has ever done."

A native of St. Louis, Mo., Repp had spent 12 years studying in U.S. and Canadian seminaries before anger over the 1968 encyclical — which reaffirmed the church's ban on artificial contraception — and discouragement about the Vietnam War led him to "drop out" in Europe for several years. "I already had five albums, and I had been traveling all over," he recalled. "I was supposed to be some kind of expert on liturgy, and I could hardly spell it."

When Repp returned to the United States in 1971, he accepted an invitation to serve as a liturgical music consultant at Cornell University. "I liked the (Ithaca) area so much after that I decided to stay," he said.

His work with the university's Catholic and Protestant communities gradually eroded Repp's disaffection with the church and music. "I started getting rid of my bitterness," he recalled. "I remember someone saying that 'We could all leave the church, but who would fill it up?'"

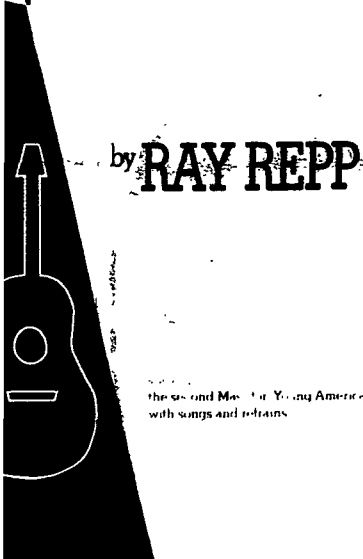
Meanwhile, the urgings of friends and his own inclinations kept leading him back to music. To avoid the publishing problems that had plagued Repp in the past, he and Father William Kelly founded their own company, K & R Music Publishing, headquartered in Trumansburg, where Repp now lives.

These days — with nearly a dozen albums to his credit — Repp is more cautious not only about publishing contracts, but also about the music he selects for publication. "I hope that what I'm doing now is writing music that responds to what's happening around me today," he said. "My (liturgical) music now is almost all chosen from the point of view of helping to build a supportive community of people."

His vision is to create the liturgical equivalent of what slick advertising jingles accomplish — to make music that brings Gospel themes into people's lives as readily and as routinely as McDonald's theme

Continued on page 16

Allelu!



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the purchasing parish or group is re- die proper copyright notices with co- Some publishers also ask purchasers each time a piece is copied and used bmitting a copy of the copies.

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