

# Pope calls for 'deeper grasp' of liturgy

By Agostino Bono  
NC News

VATICAN CITY — The period of major liturgical changes following the Second Vatican Council has ended and reforms must now concentrate on giving Catholics a "deeper grasp" of the liturgy's meaning and getting rid of abuses, Pope John Paul II said in a new apostolic letter.

The changes introduced since the council have been well received by the vast majority of Catholics, the pope said, but there is still a need for bishops "to root out" abuses and "outlandish innovations."

The pope's 37-page letter was addressed to the world's bishops and priests to mark the 25th anniversary of Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. It was dated Dec. 4, 1988, the anniversary date, and made public by the Vatican May 13.

Major liturgical changes since Vatican II have included allowing Mass in the vernacular and a restructuring of Mass readings, prayers and the order of events at Mass.

The pope reaffirmed current church norms and told Catholics not to expect any major changes in current liturgical practices.

"One cannot therefore continue to speak of change as it was spoken of at the time of the constitution's publication," he said.

"Rather one has to speak of an ever deeper grasp of the liturgy of the church, celebrated according to the current books and lived above all as a reality in the spiritual order," the pope added.

Positive effects of liturgical changes have been greater understanding of the Bible and the development of a generation of priests and laity that "now acts with responsibility in the church and society," the pope said.

Other positive aspects are "the increased participation of the faithful by prayer and song" and the development of ministries and responsibilities for lay people, he added.

The pope said the liturgy "is like the village fountain to which every generation

comes to draw water ever living and fresh."

The post-conciliar period also has seen "erroneous applications" of liturgical reform which "disfigure it and deprive the Christian people of the genuine treasures of the liturgy," he added.

"It cannot be tolerated that certain priests should take upon themselves the right to compose eucharistic prayers or to substitute profane readings for texts from sacred Scripture," he said.

Other abuses cited include "illicit omissions or additions; rites invented outside the framework of established norms; postures or songs that are not conducive to faith or a sense of the sacred; abuses in the practice of general absolution; and confusion between the ministerial priesthood, linked with ordination, and the common priesthood of the faithful."

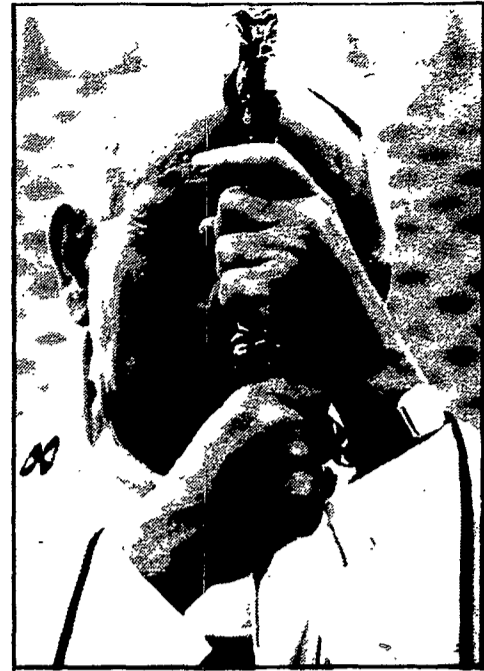
The pope did not give specific examples nor cite countries or regions where he believes these abuses occur.

"It is up to the bishops to root out such abuses," the pope said.

A major challenge facing the church is adapting the liturgy to local cultures so that it is better understood, he added.

This is a "delicate matter" and must be done by people well-trained in history, theology and culture, the pope said.

"Liturgical diversity can be a source of enrichment, but it can also provoke tensions; mutual misunderstandings and even



AP Wide World Photos  
Pope John Paul II prays in Antananarivo stadium, Madagascar, during an open air Mass Sunday morning, April 30. About 100,000 of the faithful came to see the Holy Father.

"Diversity must not damage unity," he added.

Adaptation also requires "when necessary, a breaking with ancestral customs incompatible with the Catholic faith," said the pope.

The pope also asked liturgists to build on "the riches of popular piety, purifying and directing them toward the liturgy as the offering of the people."

## Father Hehir to address Social Ministry dinner

Father J. Bryan Hehir, counselor of social policy at the United States Catholic Conference, is the keynote speaker for the second annual social ministry dinner of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, Friday, June 2, at the Mapledale Party House, Rochester. The title of his address is "Life: how to defend it at all stages."

Father Hehir served the National Con-

ference of Catholic Bishops as key staff person in writing "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and our Response," (1983) and "Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy" (1986).

For information about the dinner, contact Judy Taylor at the Pastoral Office, 716/328-3210, ext. 307.

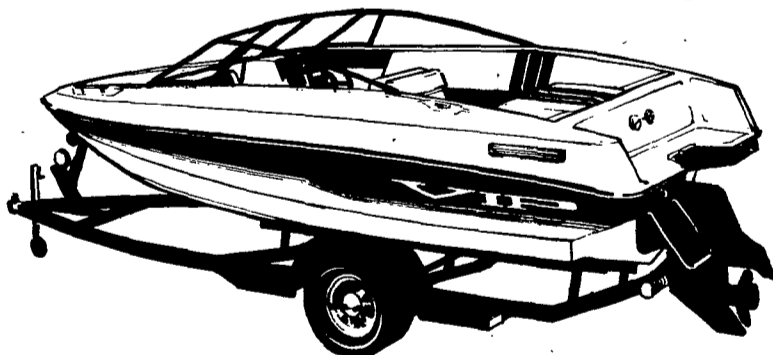
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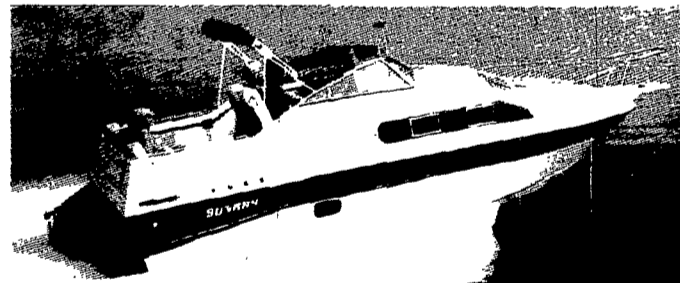
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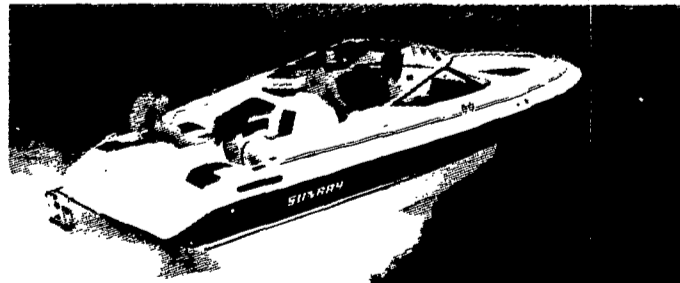
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