

Celebrants should avoid 'free-wheeling' during Mass

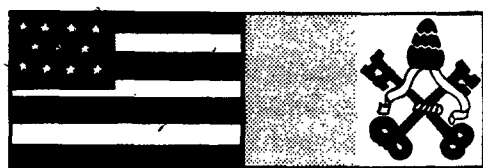
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier Columnist

From a Chicago friend: "Just a quick note with a new address and phone number. Glad to hear Rob and family are doing well. The church seems in more turmoil than ever. I'm tired of the 'new religion' ... feel like a member of some revivalist sect."

Comment: Thirty-five years ago, Jerry was a sergeant at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, where I was one of 32 chaplains. Three to seven of us were Catholic chaplains. (The number depended on supply.)

Jerry was about 23 years old. In 1953, there was much interest in religion among our young men. Jerry was one of several men who used to help with chapel devotions, CCD instructions and other general assistance.

He had been with the Benedictines for a few years, and was quite knowledgeable



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

and deeply devoted to the faith. I have kept in touch with many of our men from service days, and we often exchange information about companions of their days. He was one.

Before Jerry's note came, I phoned him in Chicago because I had lost his address. He mentioned — among other tidbits of information — that there are 27 auxiliary bishops to Cardinal Bernardin in Chicago. All of them live together in a 55-room mansion in which Cardinal Cody had lived in sole splendor. Father Greeley and Cardinal Bernardin often do not see eye to eye,

yet both are devoted to the church.

Jerry's Benedictine training — with its reverence for beautiful liturgy — finds no solace in free-wheeling liturgies which are inflicted upon the helpless people in some parishes.

When the Mass liturgy was being experimented with in 1972, this column remembered Mass as celebrated by Monsignor Craugh, the late rector of the now defunct St. Bernard's Seminary.

The column stated, "Laity and seminarians admired the devotion with which Monsignor Craugh celebrated Mass, and his meticulous observance of the rubrics — hands, arms, eyes, head, knees — all responded reverently in the same way, at the holiest of holy worship. The effect was to attend the Mass rather than the celebrant, who decreased unobtrusively behind the manifest Christ offering Himself on the altar. Good rubrics restrain a priest from intruding his personal oddities into the Mass,

or — to put it bluntly — they save the worshipping community from a priest's temptation to cuteness."

Jerry is not alone in his chagrin of free-wheeling liturgy. For priests who concelebrate, it's a problem when the celebrant arbitrarily changes the text of the Mass, causing a verbal collision like ugly discordants in a majestic symphony.

Have you ever thanked a priest for a reverent celebration of Mass and a helpful homily? One of the nicest compliments I ever received came after I celebrated Mass and gave a quite simple homily-instruction. A parishioner, who was approximately 40 years old, came over and said: "That was the finest homily I have heard in years. I am a convert from Lutheranism, and was used to good preaching. You are like our pastors. You talk to the people, not at them."

I'm still not sure what that means, but it was nice to hear.

Acceptance is a year-round, Christian quality

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier Columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 3:1-12; (R1) Isaiah 11:1-10; (R2) Romans 15:4-9.

The setting for Sunday's readings is the desert. John appears in the desert. At the time of Our Lord's coming, the world was a spiritual desert — arid; wild and desolate. Hence the "herald's voice in the desert" boomed out, "Reform your lives! The reign of God is at hand."

What is this reign of God that calls for a reformation of life? It is what Isaiah the prophet foretold (R1); namely, a world in which misfits (wolves) would fit in with others (lamb), where the unlikable (lions) would be liked (calves).

The reign of God is a new Eden, a paradise on earth regained, where all living things — the wild and the tame, the savage and the gentle — will live in harmony, peace and love of one another. Paul VI stated that the mission of the church was precisely this: "to create a civilization of love."

And what reformation in our lives must be made to bring about this reign? Paul put it succinctly when he said "accept one another, as Christ accepted you" (R1). The Greek verb translated "accept" means "to receive" or "to welcome" into one's own home or friendship. It means being neighborly. It means for the strong to welcome the weak in faith — not arguing over peri-

pheral things.

It means not to despise others different from you — as Jews did the Gentiles and the Gentiles did the Jews. It means, in the words of Mother Teresa, "to love as he loves, help as He helps, give as He gives, serve as He serves, and rescue as He rescues." With Christ there is no distinction of persons.

In the "Peanuts" comic strip, one of the little girls was saying that Christmas is a time for kindness and good will, a time when we accept one another into our homes and hearts.

Charlie Brown asks, "Why just Christmas? Why can't we be kind and accepting and neighborly all through the year?"

She looks at Charlie and sneers, "What are you, some kind of religious fanatic?"

Well, Charlie Brown thought like St. Paul. He saw Christian acceptance as a year-round, everyday Christian quality. As we welcome Christ into the world at Christmas, so we must welcome one another.

Christmas is a time to dust off the welcome mat and open our hearts and homes to others. "Accept one another, as Christ accepted you."

In an Irish glen there is a wayside fountain with a drinking cup attached to it bearing this Gaelic inscription: Cead mille Failte (a hundred thousand welcomes). What kind of a welcome we give Christ at Christmas will be in proportion to the welcome we give to others in our everyday lives in His name.

Our famed Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island is a beautiful symbol not only of freedom but also of welcome and acceptance. On the pedestal of the statue are inscribed the memorable words of Emma Lazarus: From her beacon hand glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command the air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Again it is later than you think — "even now, the ax is laid at the root of the tree."

THE BIBLE CORNER

This is a warning, not a condemnation. Trees that don't bear fruit are given one last chance. The taproot is struck with an ax, to shock it back to life. If still no fruit comes, then it is cut down. Quite a contrast to Isaiah's sprouting shoot and blossoming bud! Now is the time — even now — to bear fruit by accepting one another, as Christ accepted you.

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Grief...

Is help available?

Grief is the name of a complex combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. It occurs when we lose someone or something very important to us.

It is a natural reaction to the realization that we are not all powerful, that we ourselves are mortal.

Everyone deals with grief in a different personal way.

GRIEF RESOURCE INFORMATION FORUM and the PASTORAL CARE CENTER at Rochester General Hospital jointly sponsor a monthly bereavement group called WORKING THROUGH LOSS.

The group provides information, education and peer support for adults recovering from the death of a significant person in their lives.

The group meets the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the E-5 conference room at Rochester General Hospital.

Easy-to-follow signs are posted upon entering the hospital from the parking ramp.

Open to all adults. There are no dues or fees. You may attend as long as you choose.

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