

# Priest advocated liturgy reform, social justice

By Father Richard McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

If you have more than a passing acquaintance with the 20th-century liturgical movement in the United States, most of the following names will be familiar to you: Virgil Michel, Michael Mathis, Gerald Ellard, Martin Hellriegel, Reynold Hillenbrand, Godfrey Diekmann, Frederick McManus and Gerald Sloyan.

These people are among the North American liturgical leaders given chapter-length treatment in a new book, *Leaders of the Liturgical Movement*, compiled and edited by Father Robert Tuzik and published by Liturgy Training Publications in Chicago.

One name not accorded such recognition is that of Father Shawn G. Sheehan, a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston, who died this past Oct. 19 at age 78.

The omission is not surprising because Shawn Sheehan never achieved, nor sought, any kind of public status or eccle-

siastical honors. He was modest and self-effacing, almost to a fault. I know this from first-hand experience.

Father Sheehan was one of my professors at St. John Seminary, Brighton, Mass., where he taught church history and liturgy.

His teaching style was so low-key that some of the seminarians referred to his classes as "Yawn with Shawn." There was a funny kind of wiggle in his voice that invited good-natured mimicry. But the laid-back style could not completely disguise the substance.

With all due respect to other members of the same faculty during those pre-Vatican II years, Shawn Sheehan taught us more theology and communicated more pastoral wisdom than all of our other professors put together. He was a model of Christian ministry in every way — like Jesus himself, coming not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45).

I am indebted to my classmate, Father

Richard Butler, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Lexington, Mass., for reminding me of some of the details of Shawn Sheehan's remarkable life as a priest, liturgical pioneer and advocate for social justice. At Father Sheehan's request, Father Butler preached at the funeral Mass.

A few months ago, after Father Butler learned of Shawn's terminal illness, he visited with Shawn at St. Joseph's Manor in Boston. Father Sheehan had been informed by his doctor only a few weeks earlier of the malignancy that would finally take him.

Father Butler asked Father Sheehan for his thoughts on death. He described Shawn as relaxed, "such was his solidarity with those whose deaths he had been present to."

And then he asked Shawn about his own story, what would he want to be most remembered for.

They talked for nearly two hours, characteristically not about himself but



## ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

about other people in his life.

Shawn spoke about the many liturgical weeks he attended and help plan, his presidency of the National Liturgical Conference and the struggle to make the liturgy a living force in Catholic life and mission, of the international liturgy congress he had attended in Assisi, of his work as a seminary professor, of his first pastorate in an inner-city parish and of the invaluable help he received from his first pastoral associates there.

He spoke of the Sacramental Apostolate of the Archdiocese of Boston, of his involvement in the farm workers' struggle for justice in California, of his dealings with local and federal agencies to promote anti-poverty and Model Cities programs, of his educational efforts on behalf of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on peace, of his affiliation with Packard Manse, a pioneering ecumenical center; and of his final pastoral assignment at St. Elizabeth Seton's in Acton, Mass., where he served for 11 years and where he was buried.

I was personally touched by the reference in the funeral homily to Father J. Bryan Hehir, of Georgetown University and the U.S. Catholic Conference, and to myself, who Father Butler described as "two students of whom (Father Sheehan) was quite proud." It was Shawn, in fact, who brought Bryan and me together for the first time at the seminary's summer session in 1961, beginning a friendship that continues to this day.

"Shawn's great gift," Father Butler noted in his homily, "was the ability to know he was on the road to Emmaus. He was in solidarity with those who mourn, who suffer, who search."

Those of us who mourn his death must continue his search, on behalf of the church, for a vital experience of worship, of justice and of peace.

The memory of his example will light the way.

# Scratching at door portends coming of kingdom

By Cindy Bassett  
Courier columnist

Samuel immediately fell into a deep sleep that night. It was not going to be an evening of peace. His weariness gave way to nightmares from which there seemed no escape.

In one of his dreams, he was being detained by a Roman soldier. "I must open my shop for business," Samuel told him.

"You have no business anymore for you have not paid your taxes," the soldier replied. "You will be sold as a slave or else go to the debtors' prison!"

"No!" Samuel said aloud as he sat upright in bed. As he looked around the room he thought, "Could it be morning already? I don't remember it being a full moon, and yet it is as light as day in here."

Samuel bolted from his bed and went right to the window. It was not the moon that illuminated the night sky. Instead, it was something very bright with a tail like a comet. Could this be the star that Benjamin had told him about today?

He turned away from the window. The room seemed too small to contain the light and he felt an odd warmth.



## THE BIBLE CORNER

"Benjamin is right," Samuel thought. "I keep too much to myself. My mind is playing tricks on me. It's night and yet it seems to be day. I'm alone and I feel as if someone is here with me in this room."

Samuel was just about to dismiss the entire business when he heard something that sounded like scratching at the front door. He thought it was probably a mouse or an animal searching for food.

He crept into the shop and said, "Go away. I have nothing to give you."

The scratching suddenly stopped. Before he had even left the shop, it began again in earnest.

"Go away, I tell you," Samuel shouted.

The next thing that he heard frightened him so much that his heart pounded loudly even in his ears. Not only did a voice speak to him, but it called him by name.

"Samuel, I don't want anything from

you. I have something for you," the voice said.

Samuel thought it might be a lunatic at his door! A place where outcasts lived was located just outside the city. They only came out at night to beg for food. This one must have seen his name on the storefront. "That was it," Samuel thought. And he was not so foolish to fall for it. Samuel knew he could be robbed or murdered.

Just before he left the storefront, Samuel shouted one final, "Go away and leave me alone!"

Before he retired again, Samuel took a piece of cloth and tacked it to the window. All night long the scratching continued.

The next morning when he awoke, Samuel crept to the front door. Before he dared to open the door, Samuel looked out. He saw nothing. Still, just to be sure, he opened the door very slowly.

He saw scratch marks at the bottom of the door. Samuel bent to inspect them. They weren't just scratch marks, they were words. He crouched closer to read them. It was only one sentence, starting with his name: Samuel, the Kingdom of God is at hand.



**Over 10,000 HOME DECORATING AND GIFT IDEAS!**

Now offering Winter Craft Classes in Basket Weaving, Cake Decorating & Oil Painting

**YOU MUST STOP BY AND SEE OUR HUGE SELECTION FOR YOURSELF. LOWEST PRICES IN TOWN.**

• HAND CRAFTED ITEMS • ANTIQUES • COLLECTIBLES

2485-A Dewey Ave. (by the railroad tracks)

CHRISTMAS CORNER  
Decorations • Cards & Books • Tree Trimmings

New Consignors Welcome **621-4475**



**Senior Citizen Days**

Every Monday & Tuesday

**\$1.00 off any service**

**\$3.00 off any perm**

Exp. 12/29/90

Prices range from \$12/perm  
\$3/shampoo & set

2255 Ridge Rd. E. • Culver Ridge Plaza  
**342-9011**

**PLEASE PATRONIZE OUR ADVERTISERS**

---

**RIDGEMONT PARK**

E. Ridge Rd. & Carter St.  
Spacious 1 & 2 Bedroom  
Garden Apts.

- Offering heat & hot water
- 24-hour maintenance
- Sr. Citizen Discount
- Laundry
- Storage facilities
- FREE 21 channel satellite TV
- Great location for shopping, malls, x-way & bus.


**56 BRAMBURY DR.**  
**544-1600**

# Logos book store

**KNEELING SANTA**  
by Roman

- Ornaments
- Figurines
- Bells

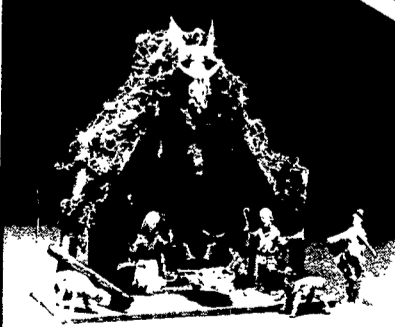
• Musicals in various sizes



**THE STREET OF SHOPPES — 1600 Ridge Road West (716)663-5085**

Fontanini.  
The Collectible Creche

**OPEN STOCK**  
4 1/2" 5 1/2" 6" 7 1/2" 12"



by Roman

With the Fontanini Collectible Creche, you can add figures each and every Christmas! Painted by hand in warm wood tones, the sculptures are virtually unbreakable so even small toddlers can help arrange the family nativity scene.

**Rochester Oratorio Society**

Roger Wilhelm, Music Director

With members of the  
ROCHESTER PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA  
H A N D E L'S

**MESSIAH**

Candlight Performance

Susan Gonzalez, soprano; Carol Robinson, mezzo soprano  
Gerald Grahame, tenor; Keith Kibler, bass-baritone

Friday, December 14, 1990, 8:30 p.m.  
Saturday, December 15, 1990, 8:30 p.m.

Asbury First United Methodist Church 1050 East Avenue

For tickets or information, call 288-8986 or 473-2234. Group discounts available