

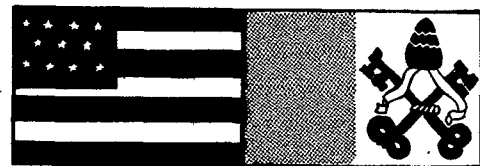
Book offers 'singing' history of early church

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Father Joseph T. Gaynor, the former pastor of St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira Heights, is one of our eight priests living at St. Alphonsus rectory in Auburn. Last May, he asked me: "Would you be interested in going to the Priests Workshop at Gannon College in Erie? The date is June 3 through 6."

The workshop included lectures by Father Robert Moore, an anthropologist; Monsignor Thomas Herron, dean of St. Charles Seminary, Philadelphia; and Capuchin Father Ronald Lawlor, author and spiritual director. On the last day of the workshop, Father Kenneth Baker, SJ, editor of the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, spoke on the Roman synod, the proposed universal catechism and finally on the formation of seminarians.

The lectures were good. I found the discussions and the question/answer periods afterward quite illuminating. But as often is the case, some unplanned occurrences proved especially interesting. Such was the case when — on the last morning of the three-day program — Father Gaynor and I



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

had breakfast with Father Baker.

He was wound up about a recent book, entitled *Why Catholics Can't Sing*, by Dr. Thomas Day. The author's credentials are most impressive. He is currently chairman of the music department at Salve Regina College in Newport, R.I.

For centuries in Ireland, Dr. Day writes; it was a penal offense to celebrate Mass or even to attend Mass. A reward was given to anyone who would lead the law to the capture of a priest or of churchgoers.

Consequently, the Irish met secretly, often in the hills. They would use a great rock as an altar, and would post men to watch out for law officials seeking to arrest churchgoers or even execute the priest.

During the celebration of quiet, clandestine Masses, the Irish did not sing. Voices could be heard singing from Protestant churches, but the Irish equated singing in church with persecution and the "quiet Mass" with the Catholic faith.

Due to the vast immigration of Irish to the United States, beginning with the potato famine in the late 1840s, the church in the states became predominantly Irish. Hence the traditional "silent Mass" evolved. Even today, older Catholics remember the "Low Mass" in Latin. The Low Mass was quiet, swift, reverent, efficient and spiritually soothing.

When the Germans, Slavics and Italians came, they brought good music and devotion into the Mass celebrations. But with the Irish ecclesiastical ascendancy — most of the bishops were of Irish descent — the "quiet Mass" prevailed.

Dr. Day offers a hilarious illustration of the resistance to liturgical changes, which also affected church music. He writes: "In the early 1970s a friend of mine attended Mass in one of Philadelphia's grand old parishes. In the same pew, right next to him was an elderly lady who was energeti-

cally fingering her rosary beads all during the Mass. She stood, sat and knelt with everyone else, but her thoughts seemed to be far removed from the activity around her.

"The time came for the Handshake of Peace. My friend turned to the elderly lady and holding out his hand in friendship, said, 'May the peace of the Lord be with you.' The old lady scowled. She looked at the proffered hand as if it were diseased. 'I don't believe in that bunkum,' she replied, and without missing a breath, went back to the quiet mumbling of her rosary."

In the July *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Father Baker writes: "In a brilliant fifth chapter entitled 'Ego Renewal,' Dr. Day points out that too many priests and song leaders are on an 'ego trip' in front of the congregation. Also the constant changing of the songs over the years so that none are really learned by the people is another reason why Catholics can't sing in church."

Why Catholics Can't Sing is honest. The book will revolutionize music in many of our churches. It may anger some people and please others, but it should concern everyone.

The many can become one by receiving the Eucharist

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:1-15; (R1) 2 Kings 4:42-44; (R2) Ephesians 4:1-6.

Unlike the other evangelists' Gospels, St. John's Gospel has no special year of its own. (Whereas Cycle A is devoted to Matthew's Gospel, Cycle B to Mark, and Cycle C to Luke).

John's Gospel is spaced over the three-year cycle. John is the evangelist of Lent and the Easter Season. Because the Marcan Gospel is so brief — it's only 16 chapters — chapter six of John's Gospel is used for the five weeks from the 17th to the 21st Sunday.

The church uses this interlude to reflect on the great mystery of faith — the most holy Eucharist.

John's sixth chapter is his theology of the Eucharist. John begins the chapter with the miracle of the loaves, illustrating how Jesus could do anything he pleased with bread. Note that Jesus did not create loaves, he multiplied them. In this way he showed his power over the substance of bread.

Fish are also used to relate the event more closely with the Eucharist. The Greek word for fish is *ichthus*. In the early church, *ichthus* was an acronym: the "i" stood for Jesus; the "ch" for Christos; the "th" for *theou* (of God); the "u" for *uios*



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

(son); and the "s" for *soter* (savior). *Ichthus* meant Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. The fish symbolized Christ. The miracle of the loaves and fish symbolized the greater miracle of the Eucharist, where bread becomes Christ, Son of God, Savior.

The miracle probably took place on the plain of Bataiha, about three miles northeast of where the Jordan enters the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias; about four miles by boat from Capernaum; and approximately five miles by foot or about a two-hour walk.

Jesus went up a mountain in Bataiha, sat down and saw a vast crowd coming toward him. Playfully, Jesus asked Philip — a native of nearby Bethsaida — about buying bread for them. Jesus' question elicited a colorful answer from Philip, who said, "200 days wages could not buy loaves enough to give each of them a mouthful." Perhaps that was all the money they had in the apostolic purse.

Andrew suggested that a lad had five

barley loaves and two fish (barley loaves were much cheaper than wheat). Maybe he thought Jesus might do some good with so little. The pretense was over. Jesus took charge and gave orders for the people to sit down on the spring grass. A picnic atmosphere seemed to prevail, one that was festive and joyful.

Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and passed them around. He did the same with the dried fish, giving people as much as they wanted. He then told the disciples to gather up the leftovers to show people the value of God's gifts, to make the miracle more apparent, and to teach that giving never impoverishes the giver.

The miracle had a profound effect on the people. When Passover arrived, patriotic feelings ran high. Jesus realized they wanted to carry him off to Jerusalem to make

him king so he fled back to the mountain alone. He was sad because they had missed the whole point of what he had done.

In the second reading Paul speaks of unity: one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Unity is the hallmark of the Church of God. The bond of unity is love. The cause of love is the Eucharist. As many grains of wheat make up the one bread, so the many can become one by the worthy reception of the bread of life.

During Mass we pray, "May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit" (Eucharist Prayer II). There we can find the source of love: Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit, both of which we receive at Mass. And love is what makes all one body, the church.

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