

COLUMNISTS

Liturgy remains a battleground

One need not have read the documents of the Second Vatican Council to appreciate the extent to which the council transformed our understanding of the church. One has only to participate in the liturgy to come to that awareness, because the liturgy is the point at which the work of the council is most tangibly evident.

That is why the reform of the liturgy has always been the main battleground for those least happy with the changes wrought by Vatican II.

They come face-to-face with the council's "bad deeds" every Sunday at Mass. The altar and the priest face the people. The Mass is in the vernacular and recited aloud, including the Canon, or Eucharistic Prayer.

The entire congregation actively responds to the prayers, in word and song. They even shake hands as part of the ritual.

Lay people, women as well as men, move freely in the sanctuary, performing sacred tasks that only a priest would have been authorized to perform in the past: doing the Scripture readings from the pulpit, or lectern, and even distributing Holy Communion — and in the hand. And where once there were only boys serving at the altar, now there are girls as well.

The new liturgy proclaims a message that no active Catholic, of whatever



By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

point of view, can possibly miss, even if she or he has never laid eyes on a copy of *The Documents of Vatican II*.

The message of the reformed liturgy is that the church is the whole People of God. Everyone, not just the clergy, has an essential role to play in its life and mission, and particularly in its most sacred function: the worship of God.

There are many ministries in the church, non-ordained as well as ordained. In the Mass we have readers, ministers of hospitality (ushers), altar servers, eucharistic ministers, music ministers, those who bring forward the gifts, and even an occasional married deacon assisting the presiding priest.

When the faithful gather for the Eucharist, they do so as a community, and not as so many individuals driving up to the teller window at a bank to make spir-

itual deposits or withdrawals.

Rather than kneeling and burying their faces in their hands upon entering their pew, they greet and converse with those nearby. (In the days before Vatican II, children were taught to confess the "sin" of "talking in church.") After Mass, they sometimes applaud the choir and the music ministers, and then move to an adjoining room for coffee and refreshments and more conversation.

Opposition to this reformed liturgy and to the communal environment in which it occurs is, at root, opposition to the reformed church: a church that is no longer supposed to be clerical, patriarchal, sectarian, insular, and authoritarian.

Last week's column made reference to Cardinal Alfons Stickler's solemn high performance of the Latin Tridentine Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, in early May, and to his published speech and interview the previous year on the "theological attractiveness" of the old rite.

Cardinal Stickler, now retired from his post as Vatican archivist and librarian, has mounted some fundamental doctrinal challenges to the reformed liturgy authorized by Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council.

He does not like Communion in the hand. He does not like the audible proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer.

He does not like the change in the translation of the words of consecration from "for you and for many" to "for you and for all." He does not like the use of the vernacular (a "Babel of common worship," he calls it). He does not like the renewed emphasis on the meal aspect of the Mass, as if it did not have its very origin in a meal, the Last Supper!

He blames all of these unfortunate changes (each "an adaptation to the Protestant idea of worship") on the personal weakness of Paul VI, who could not resist the pressures of his fellow bishops.

Cardinal Stickler, of course, will pay no price for his intemperate words about Vatican II, Paul VI, and the official liturgy of the church, because in today's Catholic Church there are no "enemies on the right," only on the left or in the moderate center, with names like King, Gaillot, Curran, Hunthausen, and Boff.

But thank God that the church has a special ministry that is commissioned to build bridges between factions, to heal wounds, to unify rather than divide, to deal even-handedly with everyone, to insure the true catholicity and inclusiveness of the church.

We call that ministry Petrine, and its minister the pope.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Children of God should not be afraid

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 10:26-33. (R1) Jeremiah 20:10-13. (R2) Romans 5:12-15.

Probably the two greatest plagues of man are fear and worry. No doubt that is why one of the most frequent expressions in the Bible is, "Do not be afraid." Jesus uses it three times in Sunday's Gospel.

Some people get afraid while flying. Playwright George S. Kaufman once said, "I like terra firma — the more firma, the less terra."

Fear is an emotion that affects everyone. Everyone's afraid of something. Some people have fears that are almost pathological. Some people are afraid to ride elevators. Some are afraid to get up in front of an audience. Some people are afraid of heights. Some are afraid of rejection; others are afraid of failure, afraid of looking foolish, afraid of being hurt, afraid of being criticized. The list goes on and on.

And that is a sad thing, because fear limits us. Take a giraffe in a zoo. It is tall, graceful, and far more massive and muscular than you'd expect. Its neck is thin but thick; its legs short but more powerful than you can imagine. One kick could send an ambitious lion packing. Yet this massive, stately animal is enclosed in a small compound by no cage, no walls, just a simple waterless moat, no deeper than the beast's knee. Freedom is just two steps away. But the beast will not



By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

take the risk of stepping down into the moat for fear of breaking its neck.

So the words of Jesus are good news, "Do not be afraid." Here are some reasons we don't need to be afraid.

First of all, many of our fears are out of proportion to any real threat. Many of us live in constant dread of such problems as threatened layoffs at work or drugs and weapons in the schools even though such fears are unjustified by the facts.

Douglas Rumford in his book *Scared to Live* states that 60 percent of our fears are totally unfounded; 20 percent are already behind us; 10 percent are so petty they don't make any difference; half of the remaining 10 percent are real, but we can't do anything about them. That means only 5 percent are real fears that we can do something about.

I don't know how accurate those figures are, but we tend to blow our fears out of proportion to our real life situation. In fact, we often complicate life un-

necessarily because of our anxieties. So we must go back to the advice of Jesus: "Do not be afraid."

First, we should not be afraid, because we are children of God. He is our Father — a Father almighty. He loves each one of us more than we can imagine; and he is all-powerful, there is nothing he cannot do and will not do for us if it is for our good. What a friend we have in God!

Some of us are ruled by our fears because we lack confidence in ourselves. How we need to listen to the words of Jesus: "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Secondly, we should not be afraid, because our God is not a God of anger, a God who is always judging us, a God who intervenes willy-nilly to punish some people and reward others.

For some of us, the problem is our own guilt — guilt over our own past sins. Guilt keeps us from trusting God, causes us so much anxiety, uneasiness, unworthiness. Yet God is a God of mercy, who waits for us in the sacrament of mercy, confession, like the father of the prodigal son.

Once a saint grieved excessively over a lapse. God told him to go to the seashore and take a teaspoon of water and pour it into the sea. Then he asked the saint what

happened to the teaspoon of water — could he get it back? God told the saint the same thing happens to his sin when it is brought to the confessional. It is gone, forgotten in the ocean of God's mercy.

We live under the watchful eyes of a loving God, a God who loves us with unimaginable love, who says, "Do not be afraid ... you are of more value than many sparrows."

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming, N.Y.

Daily Readings

Monday, June 24

Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26;
Luke 1:57-66, 80

Tuesday, June 25

2 Kings 19:9-11, 14-21, 31-35, 36;
Matthew 7:6, 12-14

Wednesday, June 26

2 Kings 22:8-13, 23:1-3;
Matthew 7:15-20

Thursday, June 27

2 Kings 24:8-17; Matthew 7:21-29

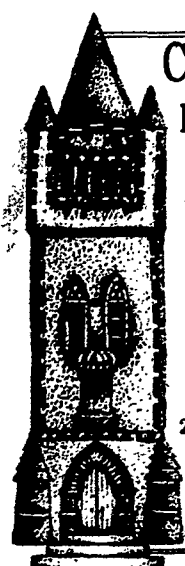
Friday, June 28

2 Kings 25:1-12; Matthew 8:1-4;
Acts 3:1-10; Galatians 1:11-20;

Saturday, June 29

John 21:15-19
Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8,
17-18; Matthew 16:13-19

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