

Faithful called to Sunday participation

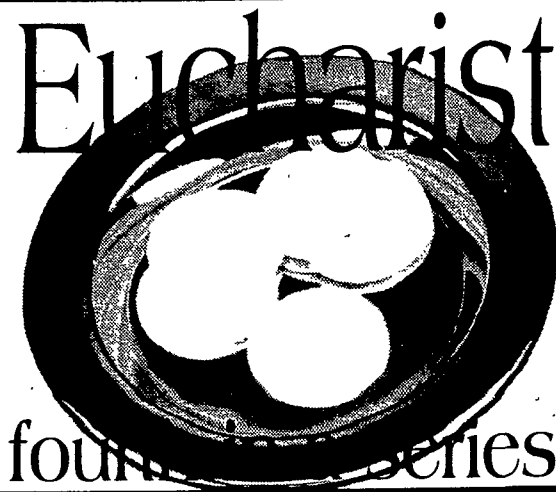
EDITORS' NOTE: Through July the Catholic Courier is publishing the diocesan document, "The Centrality of Sunday Eucharist: Guidelines for Parish Planning," in place of Bishop Matthew H. Clark's column. The bishop's column will return in August.

Sunday Obligation

We, the Church of Rochester, believe that the obligation to participate in the celebration of Eucharist on Sundays and holy days is fulfilled by attending any Catholic Eucharist, whether of the Latin or Eastern Rite Catholic Church, on the Sunday or holy day itself, or on the evening before. It is at the heart of the Church's teaching and law that we all desire to participate in the Sunday Eucharist.

The most important sense of the obligation comes first from the command of Christ to "Do this in memory of me." Secondly, it derives importance from the teaching of the tradition of which the Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks: "It was above all on the first day of the week, Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, that the Christians met 'to break bread.' From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life." (Catechism, #1166, 1167). It is also a requirement of Church law. (Canon 1248).

Since at times it may be impossible to fulfill the



Sunday obligation, impossibility to observe the law is an excusing cause.

When it is impossible to fulfill the precept to attend Mass on Sunday or a holy day, Canon Law recommends the alternatives of Canon 1248.2, if possible. These alternatives are not required by law, they are recommendations. They provide a good means of observing the sacred character of Sundays and holy days when it is not possible to participate in the Eucharistic celebration.

Therefore, the Church of Rochester, in all its parish-

es and faith communities:

- affirms that through the Sacrament of Baptism, the members of the Body of Christ have the right and responsibility to gather on Sunday for the celebration of the Eucharist. This right and responsibility is an expression of faith at the heart of discipleship and is defined in Church law.

- affirms that when Mass for Sunday or other holy day is not celebrated in a parish because of the lack of an ordained priest, the parishioners may fulfill their obligation to participate in Sunday or holy day Mass by joining the celebration of Mass at a neighboring parish. If it is not possible for members of the faithful to participate at Mass at another parish (e.g., because of distance or lack of transportation), they are encouraged to take part in the Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Hours celebrated in their parish church, or engage in prayer personally, in a family, or in a group. (Canon 1248.2).

- reminds all that the Code of Canon Law speaks of "impossibility" to participate in Mass on a Sunday or holy day. Such impossibility involves a serious cause such as distance, lack of transportation, illness, etc. It is more than a matter of personal preference or inconvenience.

- directs the diocesan Office of Liturgy to provide parishes with suggested materials and appropriate catechesis for priestless Sundays.

Next: *Alternative Celebrations*

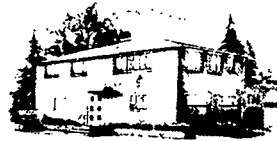
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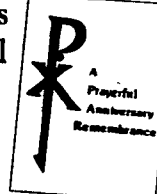
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