

COLUMNISTS

Real presence begins as community gathers

Nowhere is the Second Vatican Council's impact on the Catholic Church more evident than in the liturgy. It is not surprising, therefore, that Catholics who are less than enthusiastic about the council are especially critical of the changes in the Mass.

Readers can gain a clearer understanding of the relation between the council and the modern liturgical renewal from a recent article in *America* magazine, "Source of the Christian Spirit" (6/19/99), by Father J. Leo Klein, SJ, professor of theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Father Klein points out that the council's landmark "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," promulgated on Dec. 4, 1963, "came as a climax to over 100 years of liturgical movement that began in Europe around 1830 and crossed the Atlantic in the mid-1920's." This contradicts a mistaken belief — widespread in some Catholic circles, including even among some in the Vatican — that the liturgical renewal promoted by the council and then by Pope Paul VI was precipitously imposed upon the church without adequate study and preparation.

In fact, the liturgical movement spread slowly during the 40 years prior to the council. For example, the so-called "dia-



By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

logue Mass" began with just a few Latin responses recited by the congregation (mostly in seminaries and religious houses) — with missal in hand. More responses were added as the language of the Mass changed gradually from Latin to the vernacular. Only later did the dialogue Mass become popular in parishes, and then only in stages.

Father Klein also points out that the "new" liturgy really isn't all that new. "The changes approved by the council fathers were the fruit of generations of research by scholars into the history of Christian worship," he writes. "Many aspects of the worship of the early Christians, with its profound dependence on Jewish worship, had been lost for centuries, buried beneath early and late-medieval accretions and even distortions."

But those without any real knowledge of the history of the Mass still regard the Mass of the Council of Trent (the so-called Latin Tridentine Mass, approved by Pope Pius V) as "the way it has always been." Such a judgment is historically and factually wrong.

Father Josef Jungmann's magisterial history of the Mass, a monumental two-volume work entitled, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, showed that it was during the Middle Ages that the original meaning of the Eucharist as a communal prayer of praise and thanksgiving became obscured by a number of cultural, pastoral and theological factors. Instead of its being primarily a communal act of worship, the Eucharist became a performance.

The Eucharist in the New Testament comprised four steps: Jesus' taking, blessing, breaking and giving of his body and blood. But the medieval Christians were taught to focus on just one step: the consecratory words of Jesus, "This is my body ... this is my blood."

Because the people wanted actually to see the changed bread and wine, the host and chalice were elevated at the consecration high above the priest's head, and bells were rung to call attention to the sacred moment. So awed were the people

that many felt themselves unworthy to approach the altar to receive holy Communion. The situation did not begin to change until early in the 20th century when Pope Pius X encouraged frequent reception of the sacrament.

The tabernacle, normally located in a relatively inconspicuous place and used for the reservation of hosts for the sick, was moved atop the center of the altar, sometimes dwarfing it in the process. The sanctuary, where "the holy" resided, was fenced off by ornate Communion rails. The congregation had become, in effect, "a passive audience in ... church."

The council reminded us, however, that Christ is really present not only in the consecrated bread and wine, but also in the community itself. Accordingly, the real presence begins to "happen" as soon as the community begins to gather for the Eucharist.

Those who approach the altar to receive the eucharistic body of Christ are already the Body of Christ by baptism. As St. Augustine insisted, in receiving the body of Christ we become more fully what we are. This is what the council tried to teach and implement.

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

No one knows how big the yield of a tiny seed

15th Sunday of the Year: (R3) Matthew 13:1-23. (R1) Isaiah 55:10-11. (R2) Romans 8:18-23.

Jesus told a parable about a sower who went forth to sow seed. Not all the seed would germinate. Some seed would fall on a foot path through the field and the birds of the air would come and eat it up. Some would fall on rocky ground, and having little soil, it would soon die out. And some would fall among thorns which eventually would choke it out. But some seed would fall on good soil and it would produce an unbelievable harvest, "a hundred- or sixty- or thirtyfold."

We can well imagine the people listening to Jesus' words. Some would say, "What in the world is he talking about?" They expected to hear something profound. Instead he talked about sowing seeds. He knew some would walk away shaking their heads thinking that "He couldn't possibly be the Messiah." Others would follow him for awhile until they found someone else more interesting or worldly concerns choked them out. But there were a few — only a few — who would make a choice that would change their lives forever.

The parable of the sower calls us to make a choice. What kind of lives shall



By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

we live? Shall we live only for ourselves? Or shall we live fruitful, productive lives?

Mother Teresa once made such a choice. She did not set out to help the poor. For more than 20 years she taught the wealthiest children in Calcutta, India. But one night walking home she heard a woman crying out for help. Realizing her serious condition, Mother Teresa rushed her to the nearest hospital. But she was told to sit and wait. She knew the woman would die without immediate medical attention so she took the woman to another hospital. Again medical treatment was denied. The woman belonged to the wrong social caste. In desperation, Mother Teresa took the woman to her home. Later that night, the woman died in the comfort of

Mother Teresa's loving arms.

That night Mother Teresa resolved that this would never happen again to anyone within her reach. She decided that she would devote her life to easing the pain of those who suffered around her. Whether they lived or died, they would do so with dignity.

Do you think Mother Teresa ever dreamed that by making that choice her name would one day be a household word? Do you imagine that she even dreamed how many lives she would eventually touch? When sowing seed we never know what the result might be.

Secondly, seed sown on good ground produces bountifully. Who knows what fruit might spring up?

A Western reporter interviewed Boris Yeltsin a few years ago. When asked what gave him the courage to stand firm and help insure the fall of communism in the former USSR, Yeltsin credited the story he had read of Lech Walesa, the electrician who helped bring democracy to Poland several years ago.

Similarly, Walesa has stated that he was inspired by reading accounts of the civil rights movement in this country, led by Dr. Martin Luther King.

Dr. King has indicated that he was

spurred to action when he learned of the courage of one woman, Rosa Parks, who refused to sit in the back of the bus.

We never know, do we? God gives us seeds. It's up to us how we are going to use the seeds we are given. If we water and nurture the seed, however, at harvest time the yield will be fantastic, beyond belief. God will use the seed we sow to accomplish great things in this world, if we will only do our part.

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

Daily Readings

Monday, July 12
Exodus 1:8-14, 22;
Matthew 10:34-11:1

Tuesday, July 13
Exodus 2:1-15; Matthew 11:20-24

Wednesday, July 14
Exodus 3:1-6, 9-12; Matthew 11:25-27

Thursday, July 15
Exodus 3:13-20; Matthew 11:28-30

Friday, July 16
Exodus 11:10-12:14; Matthew 12:1-8

Saturday, July 17
Exodus 12:37-42; Matthew 12:14-21

I your Mother, am coming to visit you as THE MOTHER AND LADY OF ALL NATIONS



Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, send NOW Your Spirit over the earth. Let the Holy Spirit live in the hearts of ALL nations, that they may be preserved from degeneration, disaster, and war. May The Lady Of All Nations, who once was Mary, be our advocate. Amen

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