

OPINIONS

Changes put priest back on pedestal

To the editors:

The liturgical revisions promulgated by the Vatican are clearly meant to return the priest to a pedestal, separated from the people. According to the instructions the celebrant must remain in the sanctuary for the sign of peace, the celebrant must receive communion first, and only he, a deacon or male acolyte can clean the sacred vessels.

I think back to the pre-Vatican II church. I loved the church of my youth. The seminaries and convents were full. It was great and I was great, at least a little better than those non-Catholics. This church was flying high. It certainly didn't need reform. Times couldn't be better. Then the Holy Spirit inspired John XXI-II to call Vatican II, a council to reform the church. What I didn't realize was that my inflated pre-Vatican II identity was more about me than about God. It fed the ego more than the spirit.

This wonderful Pope had great faith. He warned the bishops early in the coun-

cil not to stifle the Spirit. He entrusted the church into God's hands and retired at night saying, "God, it's your church, I'm going to bed." He was able to let go because he had great faith. Belief is about hanging on. True faith is about letting go.

We need to return to our Christian roots which are both Trinitarian and incarnational. The Christian religion is the only religion that believes that God is relationship and we are baptized into that relationship. God is relationship of perfect love, love flowing each to the other, love overflowing in abundance by grace to each and every one of us. God is relationship and we — all of us — are created in God's image. We are created for relationship with God and with each other. We are created by Love for Love, inhabited by an indwelling of God's very self, unity within community. There is a movement in the church toward a monolithic unity of bureaucracy, ritualism and authority all based on the POWER of a few centered in Rome. This is not the unity

Christ calls us to.

Our understanding of priesthood must be incarnational. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The early Christian hymn cited by Paul (Philippians 2, 6-11) urges that the Christian, and certainly the priest must follow the way of Christ, emptying himself, humbling himself. The path of Christ is not upward mobility on a pedestal, but the downward way which leads not to hell but to heaven. When I read the instructions I thought of the apostles arguing about who would be on the privileged side of Jesus. They didn't get it then and they don't get it now. It should be about service.

We must find ways to work together for the good of the whole church. Early in August Gregory Baum told a group of former and current Basilians that he could work with anyone who was committed to love and truth, justice and peace. Amen!

Emmett Neary
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Semantics belie practice of preaching

To the editors:

The article "Minor Changes to the Mass" (Aug. 10) alerted us to the revision expected in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The Roman Missal defines how the Church understands liturgical worship and its proper celebration. Of note in the *Courier* article were the helpful comments given by the diocesan director of liturgy, Joan Workmaster. She addressed in the Instruction matters which concern our Church in Rochester: the tabernacle, genuflections, the book of the Gospels, religious images, etc.

Markedly absent in her comments and in the article itself is any mention of what the Instruction says about the homily at Mass. To the faithful of the diocese, the widespread and common practice of a lay person preaching at Mass has become a matter of concern. The semantic distinction that the preaching of a lay person is not a homily is belied by the fact that the lay preacher not only regularly rotates in the preaching schedule with the priest and deacon but is in many parish bulletins designated as the "homilist."

Advancing beyond its predecessor, the revised Instruction makes more explicit what a homily is and mandates it on Sundays and holy days. Moreover, the Instruction counsels that "only for a grave reason can it be omitted when a congregation is present." Finally, the Instruction, citing a clarification in Canon Law, states unequivocally that a homily is given by the priest or deacon "but never by a lay person" (*numquam vero laico*).

With lay persons preaching at Mass, the diocese appears to be in an anomalous situation. On the one hand, when a lay person preaches a homily, he or she violates the Instruction which reserves the homily exclusively to the priest or deacon. On the other hand, when a lay person preaches what is supposedly not a homily, the people of God are denied the homily which the Instruction mandates.

Father Jack Healy, O.Carm.
Carmelite Fathers
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Vatican's timing 'ironic'

To the editors:

I find it rather ironic that Cardinal Ratzinger would publish the document stressing the exclusivity of the Catholic Church during the month when the intention of the Apostleship of Prayer Intentions is "so that Muslim-Christian relationships may be marked by mutual understanding and respect." How sad.

Glenna Wickline
Mill Street, Candor

What is real purpose of new instruction?

To the editors:

After reading the article "Minor changes to the Mass" in the August 10 edition of the *Catholic Courier* I am left puzzling about a few things. If the liturgy is supposedly one long continuous hymn of praise to our Creator, why are we to emphasize any one part over the others as more or most important, for example: the consecration. If we are to kneel at the consecration, my question is why? What is the theology behind this kneeling, or for that matter, standing at the consecration? Do we kneel because we are remembering God becoming a human being; or are we kneeling to emphasize God

taking up residence within the inanimate, static elements of bread and wine? What exactly is it that makes it more worthy of worship than the rest of the liturgy — work of the people? And why is it so important that eucharistic ministers "do not approach the altar before the priest has received Communion and always accept from the hands of the priest the vessel from which they distribute Communion"? Just what is being emphasized here? "Consecrated hands" perhaps? Or minimizing the threat of the "priesthood of the people"? I can't help but wonder since it will keep the priest/presider at the altar handing out vessels of bread and

wine to the people of God who certainly have the freedom of the Holy Spirit to approach said altar and pick them up themselves. It certainly doesn't promote the dynamic of people growing toward their own spiritual adulthood or Christhood. Seems like it's disruptive and time-consuming, another so called "minor element" of the Communion rite taking over?

Why is it we give such reverence to inanimate elements of bread and wine as the real presence, yet not do likewise to the real presence in one another?

Patti Federowicz
Apalachin

Wishes for reversal of changes already accomplished

To the editors:

So I read "Minor CHANGES to the Mass." I don't appreciate change to my religious beliefs; never did, never will. So that's all been changed now! We do it this way from now on. That is until the next change; right? No! Wrong!

Many years ago I was given religious instruction and preparation for being administered the holy sacraments. During one period of my instruction given by a very enthusiastic nun dressed in the old style, the question was posed, "Why is the Mass always said in Latin?" Silence. Again

Sister repeated the question more forcefully. "Why is the Roman Catholic Mass always said in Latin?" Fear and stupidity gripped us all. Silence prevailed as she stared into the eyes of each one of us. Then she blurted out these words. "Latin is the unifying language of the Church. Wherever you go in the world the Mass will sound the same. You will be able to identify with it and follow it. That is why the Mass is said in Latin. It is the universal language of the church..."

I never forgot that lesson and still long to hear Mass in Latin, but it is not done

anymore. It is now in the common language of the common people; whether they be Polish, Slavic, Italian, German, Swedish, French, etc. Now to me and millions like me it is all babel and more babble. At this point I should allude to the Biblical story about the Tower of Babylon. No time for this. All I will say is an old truth. "The road to Babylon will never lead to Jerusalem." The universality of the Roman Catholic Church needs a universal tongue, LATIN.

Robert J. Miller
Gannett Road, Farmington

New Vatican dictate seems to conflict with previous actions

To the editors:

I'm wondering what's going to be the reaction in our diocese to some of the new regulations issued by the Vatican and, specifically the one requiring that the homily be given by ordained staff only and never by a lay person.

This Sunday we were happy to welcome Sister Joan Cawley, SSJ, as our new Pas-

toral Administrator. This position was created by the 1983 Canon Law due to the shortage of priests. The diocesan job description, following Canon Law, states that the Pastoral Administrator "is directly responsible for assuring the daily spiritual and temporal welfare of a parish, and for providing leadership in all areas of pastoral life." Now, how can a Pastoral

Administrator provide this leadership without delivering at least an occasional homily? These two dictates from the Vatican appear to be in direct contradiction. I'd be interested to learn how this contradiction will be resolved.

Rosalie P. Krajci
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Corning

Following in apostles' footsteps, parishioners should go where faith leads

To the editors:

When we hear of a church closing it is sad news. Father Paul Tomasso recently commented that no priest becomes ordained in hopes of closing a parish. Unfortunately that has happened at St. Francis of Assisi. For a number of years the city's west-side parishes have talked about many changes, including the closing of some parishes to create one large parish. The news of a closing should not

be a surprise to parishioners. It is what is necessary to insure the growth of the church in our areas.

It really reminds me of Jesus himself. He led his disciples from their homes to create the church. Not one of the disciples clung to their homes or material goods. They went where faith took them.

We should follow in their footsteps and go where the Spirit guides us.

Where we worship shouldn't matter. How we worship and how we live should. I welcome any and all from St. Francis to Holy Apostles. Our doors are opened wide to you and I pray that together we can live and follow Jesus as loving, caring people of Christ.

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Send your views to: letters@catholiccourier.com or mail to PO Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624-0379!