

CONTINUED...

Schism

How a group of Catholics split from the wider church

1998

August 17



Bishop Matthew H. Clark removes Father Jim Callan as administrator of Corpus Christi Parish after 22 years, citing the priest's repeated violations of church teaching on lay liturgical roles, same-sex unions and sharing Eucharist with the unbaptized.

More than 3,000 Corpus Christi parishioners approve a document titled "A Statement of Faith" in support of Father Callan and parish policies that violate church teaching.

August 22-23

September 6

Father Callan celebrates his last liturgy at Corpus; he is temporarily reassigned to Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Elmira.

Diocese of Rochester appoints a transition leadership team to oversee Corpus.

Mid-September



Questions

Continued from page 1

munion with the Catholic Church. To be in full communion, a church must accept the Roman Catholic faith, Roman Catholic sacraments and Roman Catholic governance. In essence, the Catholic Church views Spiritus Christi as it does any other Protestant church.

What about people who are regularly attending a Catholic church and services at Spiritus Christi?

Catholics who decide to formally register as members of Spiritus Christi have effectively declared that they have left the Catholic Church, Fathers Hart and Condon said.

Is the Old Catholic Church, to which Mary Ramerman is being ordained, a Catholic church?

No, the Old Catholic Church is not in communion with the Catholic Church, and is therefore not Catholic, despite its name. (The Courier will publish a story on the Old Catholic Church in its Nov. 15 issue.)

May Catholics attend the ordination of Mary Ramerman?

Although the diocese views the ordination

as an affair of another church, and, therefore, none of its concern, Father Hart did point out that Ramerman's ordination is unlike that of any other Protestant minister because it involves a church that was formed in schism with the Catholic Church.

"One cannot honor this terrible, disruptive breach by attending the ceremony as if nothing had gone on, as if this is someone from the community that never had any relationship with us," Father Hart said.

Clerics, religious and anyone "in a teaching position in the church" should not attend the ceremony, he added, nor should they participate in sacraments at Spiritus Christi. To do so would risk scandalizing the Catholic faithful and give the false impression that Spiritus Christi is a Catholic parish.

"The attendance itself signals to all who see it that it was all right, that the breach was OK, that the schism was good and positive," Father Hart said. "That would not be the truth."

How does the Catholic Church view sacraments administered by Spiritus Christi?

This is a complicated question, because it depends on the sacrament being administered and the rite by which it is administered, the priests said.

The Catholic Church does recognize certain sacraments of certain non-Catholic churches — such as baptism — depending on how they are administered. But Fathers Hart and Condon noted that the Catholic Church would have to review on a case-by-case basis the sacraments that had been received by any Spiritus Christi member who wished to enter or re-enter the Catholic Church. Father Hart added that Catholics should not seek the sacraments at a non-Catholic church such as Spiritus Christi.

Are there any plans to formally excommunicate any members of Spiritus, including such members of its pastoral staff as Fathers James B. Callan and Enrique Cadena?

There are no plans to formally excommunicate any Catholics who left the church to join Spiritus Christi. Such a formal excommunication is called *ferendae sententiae*, or declared excommunication, and can only be made by a person in authority, such as a diocesan bishop, following an investigation and formal procedure. To declare Spiritus Christi members excommunicated at this point would be "a little redundant," Father Hart said, because they have already excommunicated themselves.

Father Condon added that the Catholic Church is never anxious to formally excommunicate anyone, always hoping that people will reconcile with the church. Excommunication means a person loses the

ability to receive and celebrate the sacraments in the church.

If, as is the case with members of Spiritus Christi, a person incurs automatic excommunication — *latae sententiae* — as a result of his or her actions, that person may be reconciled to the church through the sacrament of reconciliation. Declared excommunication, on the other hand, can only be remitted by the church leader who made the formal declaration.

What counsel is offered to Catholics who wish to remain loyal to the Catholic Church, but who may sympathize with some or all of the positions espoused by Spiritus?

There is nothing wrong with having a "spiritual desire" that may conflict with certain church teachings, Father Hart said. But one cannot be in the Catholic Church and at the same time not make an "honest and sustained" effort to accept all its teachings, for example, its teaching against women's ordination. He noted that St. Therese of Lisieux felt called to the priesthood but nonetheless remained loyal to the church despite its teaching that she could not be ordained.

Father Condon added that the church offers "a security and authenticity of the faith" that one risks losing when he or she chooses to leave the Catholic Church for another church.

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