

# Liturgical reforms lauded

VATICAN CITY — Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's document on the liturgy, Pope John Paul II, bishops and speakers at a Vatican conference called the council's liturgical reforms a gift of the Holy Spirit.

While the council's goal of increasing people's understanding of the Mass and their participation in it has been achieved, the pope and others said it was time to focus on what is too often missing: silence, reverence and a sense of mystery.

"An aspect which must be cultivated with greater commitment in our communities is the experience of silence," Pope John Paul wrote in a Dec. 4 apostolic letter marking the anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

When people's daily lives are frantic and full of noise, "rediscovering the value of silence is vital," the pope wrote in the document.

Pope John Paul said Vatican II's liturgical reform was one of God's greatest gifts to the church in the 20th century.

The reform, he said, "demonstrated how it is possible to join norms which guarantee the identity and decorum of the liturgy with space for creativity and adaptation that draw the liturgy closer to the expressive needs of various regions, situations and cultures."

A lack of respect for the norms, and not the reform itself, has led to some "serious abuses" that cast a shadow over the mystery being celebrated and that cause concern and tensions among Catholics, he said.



Nancy Wiechec/CNS

**Pope John Paul II, in a Dec. 4 apostolic letter on the 40th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's document on the liturgy, said Catholic communities should have a greater commitment to experiencing silence in liturgy.**

Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria, Ill., in a Nov. 30 pastoral letter on the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which took effect in all U.S. dioceses on the first Sunday of Advent, said reverence at Mass involves dressing appropriately and arriving on time, praying and reflecting on the readings before Mass, observing the one-hour fast before Communion, repenting of one's sins, going to confession frequently, performing acts of self-denial, and showing Christian charity to others.

Participation in the Mass includes silence at appropriate times, he said, adding that periods of silence allow the mystery of Christ to "soak deeply into our soul" during the liturgy.

Pope John Paul, in a Dec. 3 docu-

ment, said that while Gregorian chant and pipe organs hold pride of place in Catholic liturgical music, the use of new compositions and other instruments are appropriate if they reflect the sacredness of the occasion and help people pray.

The music used at Mass must be sacred music based on sacred texts, he said, adding that secular music is not appropriate at Mass nor are "ancient or contemporary compositions which, while perhaps having artistic value, indulge in a language that is incomprehensible."

The document emphasized the importance of well-trained choirs, cantors and instrumentalists in helping the congregation participate through singing.

## Judge upholds new health law

Kate Blain/CNS

ALBANY, N.Y. — The battle over the Women's Health and Wellness Act, a New York State law that includes mandated contraception coverage by religious employers, will go to the New York State Court of Appeals, the state's highest court.

On Nov. 25, acting State Supreme Court Judge Dan Lamont ruled that the law is not unconstitutional, is "neutral to religion" that there's no evidence it targets the Catholic Church.

Plaintiffs immediately vowed to appeal. They include Catholic Charities of the Albany Diocese, the Catholic bishops of New York state, Temple Baptist Church in Halfmoon, First Bible Baptist Church in Rochester, Delta Development of Western New York in Buffalo and Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer in Hawthorne.

The act took effect Jan. 1, 2003. The only part of the law objected to — on grounds of religious freedom — is the requirement that religious institutions provide contraception coverage for employees. The only religious exemption in the act as it stands covers diocesan chanceries, parish rectories and seminaries. Other aspects of the law, including coverage of mammograms, bone density tests and cervical cancer screenings, have been applauded by the church.

"This law violates the free exercise clause of the First Amendment of the federal and state Constitutions," said Dennis Poust of the New York State Catholic Conference, which advocates for the state's bishops on matters of public policy.

"The fight is far from over," he said, adding that the case has the potential to reach the U.S. Supreme Court.



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