



Word on Worship

Newsletter of the Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark, NJ

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Before the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council the priest and altar boy, and perhaps the choir, were usually the only ones who had special roles at Sunday Mass in the average parish. Today the list of those with special ministries includes: permanent deacons who assist the priest; readers who proclaim the first and second readings and announce the petitions; eucharistic ministers who offer the consecrated bread and wine; altar servers, both male and female; cross and candle bearers; leaders of song; psalmists; choir members; organists and other instrumentalists; those who present the gifts of bread and wine; greeters or ushers; leaders of separate liturgies of the word with children; and those who prepare for the Mass by decorating the space,

More Important Than Ever

However, rather than lessening the role of the priest at Mass, the reforms of the Second Vatican Council have made his role and the way he fulfills that role even more important. Just consider the facts. Before the renewal of the liturgy the priest might preach at Sunday Mass, but often he would not. After the gospel (the only reading in English) the priest might read the parish announcements or a letter from the bishop, give some short lesson on a point of faith, or just lead the congregation in a "Hail Mary" or an "Our Father" for the sick of the parish. During his time at the altar the priest would stand facing the wall, his back to the people, and softly say the prayers of the Mass in Latin. What he said and how he said it were hardly noticed. Who knew if his pronunciation was correct, if his tone was reverent, if his words conveyed conviction, if his pacing was proper? For that matter, who knew if he was even reading the designated prayers in the Roman Missal? Most of the members of the congregation were busy with their own prayers and devotions, lost in their private thoughts. Unless the ringing bell of the altar boy caught their attention, what the

more critical and important. The proof of that conclusion can be found in the responses people give when asked, "How was Mass?" Other than comments on music, the responses will usually center on the priest – how long he took, the way he prayed, the tone and style he set, whether or not he could be understood, the way he came across, how he preached, whether he said anything relevant or interesting. This is not surprising. For "no other single factor affects the liturgy as much as the attitude, style, and bearing of the celebrant: his sincere faith and warmth as he welcomes the worshipping community; his human naturalness combined with dignity and seriousness as he breaks the Bread of Word and Eucharist." (*Music in Catholic Worship*, #21) While not denying the importance of the other liturgical ministers at Mass, nothing more affects the response of the assembly, nothing more increases or decreases that full and active participation called for by the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, than the way a priest presides at Mass. Unfortunately many priests are not the best presiders they could be.

In 1990 the Secretaries of the National Liturgical Commissions of Europe stated, "The weakest area in liturgy is undoubtedly the manner of exercising the ministry of presiding. Many celebrants, while there can be no doubting their personal worthiness or their good will, do not seem to be able to preside effectively." (*Leading the Prayer of God's People*, Part I, #1) Priests who are not good presiders cannot effectively call forth that active participation of the people which brings the liturgy

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PRESIDER

writing the petitions, selecting the appropriate options in the Sacramentary, preparing special rites, etc. The addition of these other ministers has led some priests to feel their role at Mass has become less important, less distinctive. They are simply one minister among many.

presider was doing and how he was doing it, was not their focus. Things have changed!

Today the role of the priest is more noticed, more significant than ever. Rather than lessening the role of the priest during the Mass, the reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council have made it

TO BE A GOOD PRESIDER, A PRIEST MUST...

life for those gathered at the table of the Lord.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* highlights the presiding role of the priest when it says, "He...presides over the assembly and leads its prayer, proclaims the message of salvation, joins the people to himself in offering the sacrifice to the Father through Christ in the Spirit, gives them the bread of eternal life, and shares in it with them. At the eucharist he should, then, serve God and the people with dignity and humility; by his bearing and by the way he recites the words of the liturgy he should communicate to the faithful a sense of the living presence of Christ." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #60)

Ten Qualities

This article suggests ten qualities a priest should possess if he is to be a good presider, if he is to communicate to the assembly "a sense of the living presence of Christ."

...BE A PERSON OF PRIVATE PRAYER

If he is to lead the assembly in joining Christ in giving praise and worship to the Father in the power of the Spirit, the priest must have a personal relationship with God, a relationship which he nourishes through private prayer. No priest can authentically speak to God in the name of the assembled community, if he does not speak to God outside the liturgy. Just as spouses who only speak to each other when they are in public drift apart, so priests whose only communication with God takes place when they preside at

liturgy, drift from the Lord. For his own sake and that of the people he serves as presider, the priest needs to set aside time each day for private prayer. Like Jesus himself, he must take time to be alone with his God.

...RECOGNIZE THE LITURGY AS PRAYER

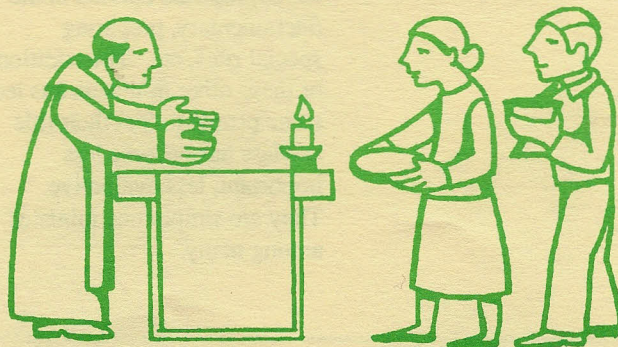
Liturgy is always prayer, the prayer of the Church, the prayer of the assembly, and the prayer of the presider. But it takes constant effort on the part of the priest to be sure he consciously enters into the prayer of the liturgy. It is easy for a priest to see the liturgy as only another thing he does, a religious ritual he performs for the sake of others. "I have to do their wedding. I got hit with three funerals last week. They want me to baptize their baby next Sunday afternoon." This can happen especially in large parishes, where because of a shortage of personnel, the priest is called upon to preside at many liturgies in the course of a week.

Liturgy can easily become routine and "thoughtless." The priest may be saying the words of the preface dialogue, calling upon the people to lift their hearts and minds in praise and thanks to God, but his own thoughts may be on his evening schedule of appointments. To preside well during the liturgy the priest

must lift up his own mind and heart to God. He must see liturgy as his own prayer and not only that of the people assembled before him. A priest can ensure that happens by making the liturgical texts he will speak aloud part of his study and private prayer. For example, a priest might use the preface and presidential prayers of a coming feast or Sunday as part of his private prayer and meditation. When he prays those texts at Mass, they will not just be someone else's words coming from his mouth but words of prayer he has made his own, words coming from his heart.

...KNOW THE LITURGY

The priest must know and appreciate the liturgy of the Church. This means priests must read and study the liturgical documents of the Church, particularly the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, *Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, *Directory for Masses with Children*, *Introduction to the Lectionary for Masses with Children*, *Music in Catholic Worship*, *Liturgical Music Today*, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, as well as the introductions to the various ritual books. These liturgical documents and introductions not only contain the directions



which govern the celebration of the Church's liturgy, they also give a basic understanding of the purpose and meaning of our rites and rituals. They explain why we do what we do. The importance of these texts, in particular that of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, is highlighted in the Foreword to the Sacramentary which states, "Without a thorough knowledge of the General Instruction, it is impossible for the priest to understand the conciliar reform or to take the principal role in planning the celebration with the other ministers and all who have special responsibilities for it."

Yet some presiders have not read the *General Instruction* and other basic texts, or if they have, they have read them only once. These essential texts should be read at least once every year or two. If sports teams continually practice and review the fundamentals of the game in order to improve their playing skills, priests also need to review the fundamentals found in the liturgical documents. The season of Lent, when Christians examine their faithfulness to their baptismal promises, might be a fitting time for presiders to re-read these basic texts and to examine how faithfully and well they are presiding at the liturgy of the Church.

...RESPECT THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

This liturgy has its origins in the Old and New Testaments and in the life and practice of the primitive Church. This liturgy has grown and developed, it has been preserved and studied, it has been fought over and defended. This liturgy has

nourished the faith of hundreds of millions of Catholics through the past twenty centuries. It has been the way Catholics have given praise and worship to God and the way God has brought them into a new relationship with him and nourished them at the table of his Word and Eucharist. This liturgy is part of the life, the tradition, the treasure of the Catholic Church. Therefore, the one who presides at liturgy must respect the guidelines and directions given by the Church, for the liturgy at which he presides is not his, it belongs to the Church.

While the liturgical documents give areas for legitimate adaptation and times when the presider may use his own words for various introductions and admonitions during the celebration, this right to adapt and change is limited. It is not proper, for example, for a presider on his "authority" to use non-approved eucharistic prayers, or to refuse to offer the chalice to the people when permitted, or to omit the washing of the hands, or eliminate the sign of peace, because this is what he wants at "his" Mass.

In presiding at liturgy, the priest must respect the directions and guidance given by the Church in her liturgical instructions and documents and in her ritual books. The current controversy over proposed changes in the Sacramentary should remind all presiders how carefully, thoughtfully, and painstakingly the liturgy they celebrate has been structured and compiled. Such rites and text are not to be revised and changed by presiders according to their will or whim.

Father James Moroney,
President of the Federation of

Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, insightfully described this lack of respect for the Church's rites and rituals when he said, "The credibility of liturgical books is at an all-time low.... It is ironic that we engage hundreds of scholars to agonize for decades over the vernacularization of a text that some parishes won't even purchase. Yet even when the book is in our sanctuaries, the frequent liberties taken with rites and texts reflect either an ignorance of the ritual or blatant disregard for its authority.... I would suggest that our most pressing issue is no longer the publication of new liturgical books but embracing and propagating an obedience to the wonderful books we already have." (Rev. James Moroney, October 7, 1994 in an address to the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. Published in the Nov. 10, 1994 issue of *Origins*, Vol. 24, #22)

...SEE THAT THE LITURGY IS PROPERLY PREPARED

Preparation for liturgy includes: deciding among the options provided in the Sacramentary; choosing appropriate texts and songs; composing the general intercessions; training the necessary liturgical ministers for the celebration; preparing the environment for the gathering and worship of the people; being certain that items to be used, such as the bread, the wine, the vestments, the vessels, the Sacramentary, the Lectionary, the Book of the Gospels, are ready and of fitting quality.

In carrying out such preparation for the liturgy the

TO BE A GOOD PRESIDER, A PRIEST MUST...



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presider should seek the help, guidance, and cooperation of members of the parish liturgy committee, of musicians and other liturgical ministers, and of other members of the assembly who have a responsibility for what takes place in the church, such as sacristans and those who prepare the environment for worship.

Inviting others to be involved in preparing the liturgy not only provides the presider with needed help and advice, it also ensures that the preparation for liturgy is done in light of the needs of the people who gather for prayer. "In planning the celebration, then, the priest should consider the general spiritual good of the assembly rather than his personal outlook. He should be mindful that the choice of texts is to be made in consultation with the ministers and others who have function in the celebration, including the faithful in regard to the parts that more directly belong to them." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #313)

Besides the areas of preparation already mentioned, the presider must also prepare his homily, his proclamation of

the gospel and that of the other texts and prayers he will speak aloud. Such preparation for liturgy takes time and effort but such time and effort are what a good presider owes his people.

...WELCOME PEOPLE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THEM AS PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

When he presides at liturgy, the priest must imitate this hospitality and welcoming spirit of Jesus. As the people of God gather, the presider, along with the other ministers of the liturgy, should be present to greet the assembling body of Christ. Greeting the people as they arrive is far more important than bidding them farewell as they leave. As he welcomes them the presider establishes personal contact with those he will lead in prayer. By his greeting he says they are important. People made to feel welcomed and important by the presider are more disposed to follow his leadership during the liturgy.

The presider also greets the people during the introductory rite of Mass. This is not a time for saying "Good Morning" but rather a time for ritually recognizing the people as the assembled body of Christ. A time for recognizing that the Lord is with them as two or three come together in his name. A presider needs to make the effort to recognize the Lord in the people before him. They are not just a crowd of nameless people filling the pews, but rather the body of Christ, his living presence in flesh and blood. A presider who sees this will treat the assembly with greater reverence and care, he will relate to them in a different, deeper way. It would be a good practice if a presider prayed each day for the grace to see the people in the pews not as a crowd, but as the real, living presence of Christ.

...BE A LEADER

At the liturgy the priest is called upon to lead the assembly in prayer. The presider opens and closes the entire liturgical celebration. He starts Mass with the sign of the cross and greeting and closes the liturgy with the blessing and dismissal. He also opens and closes the different rites within the Mass. For example, he introduces and closes the general intercessions. He opens the eucharistic prayer with the preface dialogue and closes it with the final doxology. The presider leads the people through the liturgy.

The presider also leads by directing the different ministries within the liturgy and calling attention to their roles. For example, by his personal demeanor he conveys to the reader the proper time to





approach the pulpit for the first reading. By his active listening and bodily posture the presider directs the attention of the assembly to the reader's proclamation of God's word.

To be a good leader of prayer, a priest must be comfortable with the ritual and comfortable with his position before the people. A priest who is nervous, shy and ill at ease before people, or a priest uncomfortable with ceremony

and ritual, will not inspire the assembly to follow him as he leads them in prayer. A presider must be confident and self-assured in his role.

...KNOW HOW TO SPEAK

A presider must know how to use words during the liturgy. He must value the words he speaks, he must know to whom they are addressed, and he

must know the way they should be spoken.

"In texts that are to be delivered in a clear loud voice...the tone should correspond to the genre of the text, that is, accordingly as it is a reading, a prayer, an instruction, an acclamation, or a song; the tone should be suited to the form of celebration and to the solemnity of the gathering." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #18)

The priest must also know to whom he is speaking during the liturgy. For example "among the parts assigned to the priest, the eucharistic prayer is preeminent; it is the high point of the entire celebration. Next are the prayers: the opening prayer or collect, the prayer over the gifts, and the prayer after communion. The priest, presiding over the assembly in the person of Christ, addresses these prayers to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present." (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #10)

There are other words in the Mass addressed not to God, but rather to the people, for example, the greeting, the preface dialogue, the dismissal. There are also words in the Mass which are not meant to be heard since they are the private, personal prayers of the priest, for example: the prayer before proclaiming the gospel, the prayer at the washing of hands and the prayer before communion. A presider must recognize that at Mass, as in daily life, all words are not equal.

TO BE A GOOD PRESIDER, A PRIEST MUST...

...REALIZE THAT
COMMUNICATION
ALSO TAKES
PLACE THROUGH
GESTURE AND
MOVEMENT

In his ministry Jesus did not only proclaim his message in words, he also used gesture, movement and action. For example, he made mud and smeared the eyes of the blind man, he took children in his arms and blessed them.

As he presides at liturgy the priest also uses gestures and movement. He walks in procession, he raises his arms in prayer, he extends his hands in greeting, he bows and kisses the altar in reverence, he consciously and carefully moves from place to place within the worship area, he genuflects in adoration, he lifts up vessels of bread and wine, he pours wine, he breaks bread, he offers food and drink, he traces the sign of the cross before the people. To be effective, these movements must be done with an understanding of their meaning. For example, when he extends his arms at the greeting, the presider looks at the people and opens his arms to them. By his gesture he recognizes them as the assembled body of Christ. When he extends his arms during the presidential prayers, he should raise them slightly upward as this gesture is directed not to the people but to God to whom his prayer is addressed. At the preparation of the gifts the priest lifts the bread and wine slightly above the altar. (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, #102) After the consecration he raises them higher, aware that the difference in height indicates a change in the bread and wine.

The presider must gesture and move not only with an awareness of the meaning of his actions, but he must also gesture and move with style, grace, and care. Sloppy gestures, hurried actions, thoughtless movements lead the assembly away from prayer rather than more deeply into the mystery being celebrated. "Gestures which are broad and full in both a visual and tactile sense, support the entire symbolic action. When the gestures are done by the presiding minister, they can either engage the entire assembly and bring them into an even greater unity, or if done poorly, they can isolate." (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, #56) Actions always speak louder than words, perhaps even more so in our day, when our ears are so bombarded with a variety of sounds.

...BE
COMFORTABLE
WITH SILENCE

A good presider realizes that "the proper use of periods of silent prayer and reflection will help to render the celebration less mechanical and impersonal and lend a more prayerful spirit to the liturgical rite. Just as there should be no celebration without song, so too there should be no celebration without periods for silent prayer and reflection." (Foreword to the *Sacramentary*)

At Mass when he says "let us call to mind our sins," or "let us pray," a good presider gives the people the silent time they need to do what he has asked. When he ends his homily or concludes distributing communion, he gives time for the absence of sound to be transformed into the silent

prayer and reflection of the community.

To be an able leader of these periods of silence the priest needs to be comfortable with silence in his personal life and personal prayer. He also needs to lead the people during these times of liturgical silence by doing what he has asked the assembly. He needs to pray and reflect in silence himself and not simply mark time until he begins to pray aloud.

Nothing is More Important

Of all the things a priest does in his ministry, nothing affects more people than what he does at Mass. More people will witness his ministry when he stands at the pulpit and the altar than when he teaches a class, addresses a meeting, visits the sick, balances the financial ledgers of the parish, pays off the debt, maintains the buildings, works with the children, moderates the Rosary Society, gives a day of recollection, directs a retreat, or prepares the Sunday bulletin. That being the case a priest should give nothing more of his time, attention, prayer, preparation, and effort than how he presides at liturgy.

If the people are to be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy which is their right by baptism, if for them the liturgy is to truly be the source and summit of their Christian life, then the people of God need good presiders. They need presiders with the qualities that communicate "a sense of the living presence of Christ."+

Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski
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TO BE A
GOOD
PRESIDER, A
PRIEST
MUST...

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

PLANNING AHEAD

June 11 • Trinity Sunday

Trinitarian hymns should include mention of all three persons.

June 13 • St. Anthony of Padua (Tues.)

See *Book of Blessings* for a blessing of bread.

June 18 • Corpus Christi

Appropriate day for eucharistic devotions and processions. (See *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*) Consider bulletin articles on communion in the hand and from the cup. (Available from the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, Washington, DC. 202-635-6990). Father's Day. Consider a petition in the general intercessions and using the Father's Day Blessings from the *Book of Blessings*.

June 23 • Sacred Heart (Fri.)

Appropriate day for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and eucharistic devotion.

July 2 • 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Mass of the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time is the only Mass to be celebrated. Do not anticipate the celebration of Independence Day in Mass texts or music.

July 4 • Independence Day (Tues.)

See Mass for Independence Day and for Other Civic Observances. Songs which acknowledge the nation's dependence on God are more appropriate than triumphalistic patriotic songs.

July 22 • St. Mary Magdalene (Sat.)

This memorial has proper readings. Lectionary #603

July 29 • St. Martha (Fri.)

This memorial has proper readings. Lectionary #607

August 6 • Transfiguration of the Lord

This feast replaces the Sunday celebration. Use prayer texts of the Transfiguration.

August 15 • Assumption (Tues.)

A holyday of obligation in 1995. For a blessing of herbs and produce see *Book of Blessings* #1007 ff.

August 18 • Jane Frances de Chantal (Fri.)

Optional memorial transferred from December 12; not reflected in the current liturgical books.

September 3 • 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Mass of the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time is the only Mass to be celebrated. Do not anticipate the celebration of Labor Day in Mass texts or music.

September 4 • Labor Day (Mon.)

See Mass for St. Joseph the Worker (May 1); or Mass for Civic Observances (July 4); or Mass for the Progress of Peoples; or Mass for the Blessing of Human Labor. Select texts carefully with a sensitivity to inclusive language. Songs which acknowledge the nation's dependence upon God are appropriate.

Month of October

Marian devotions, while customary in some places in October, should not overshadow or replace the proper or music texts of Sundays. Votive Masses of the BVM may be used on weekdays that are not solemnities, feasts or obligatory memorials.

October 4 • St. Francis of Assisi (Wed.)

See *Book of Blessings* #942 ff for a blessing of animals.

October 7 • Our Lady of the Rosary (Sat.)

Memorial. An appropriate day for a communal rosary during the day before the vigil Mass of Sunday.

October 8 • 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Mass of the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time is the only Mass to be celebrated. Do not anticipate the celebration of Columbus Day in Mass texts or music.

October 9 • Weekday (Mon.)

Columbus Day observance. See Mass for Independence Day or Other Civic Observances; or Mass for the Spread of the Gospel.

October 19 • Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral (Thurs.)

A feast in parishes of the Archdiocese of Newark. Replaces the memorial of the North American Martyrs.

October 20 • St. Paul of the Cross (Fri.)

Optional memorial in the U.S.A. Texts found on October 19.

November 1 • All Saints (Wed.)

A holyday of obligation in 1995.

November 2 • All Souls (Thurs.)

See *Book of Blessings* #1734 for the "Order for Visiting a Cemetery." Inscription of names of the deceased in a "Book of the Dead" throughout the month of November is appropriate.

November 9 • Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (Thurs.)

Feast. Scripture readings are selected from the Common of the Dedication of a Church. See Lectionary #701-706.

November 23 • Thanksgiving Day (Thurs.)

Mass for Thanksgiving Day (found after Nov. 30 in Sacramentary). As an alternate consider Preface for Weekdays IV (P40). For a blessing of food see *Book of Blessings* #1755.

November 26 • Christ the King

Appropriate day for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and for eucharistic devotion. See *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* and/or *Order for the Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*. An appropriate day for infant baptism especially in parishes which do not baptize during Advent.

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One year subscription to *Word on Worship*, 4 issues, \$10.00. Special Bulk rate, five or more issues to the same address, \$8.50 per year per subscription. Foreign subscription, \$13.50 per year. To begin your subscription call 201-596-4280

*"I have
loved
the beauty
of
thy house"*

Psalm 26:8

Some years ago a Sister challenged her community as it confronted change, to "unfeather our nests." This article gives us some considerations as we work at feathering/unfeathering our churches and chapels.

In facing decisions that will correlate prayer or worship spaces and art we consider relationships of various kinds as well as the needs of the church community, the parish family, with broad guidelines of the 1978 Bishops' Conference document, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, (EACW) to help us. The synthesis of the document in Vol. II, No. 3 of *Word on Worship* can be a springboard for participation in a process of review of our liturgical environment, a stimulus and support for authentic, vitalizing solutions.

Are there changes to be made? Are we looking at our worship style and finding conflicts in focus, impact, and unity? Are we becoming aware of clutter? Does the visual and obvious psychological support of liturgy suggest more simplicity, more subtlety, more coherence? Do we rearrange, trim off, add on? Do we think:



"cast" of this worshipping body, of the financial resources, of the distance to go in structuring or improving? Discussions, debates, and disagreements lead to research, insights, new outlooks, and

of unity comes without question from the concerted efforts of people, pastor, liturgical consultant, architect, and artist. Reverend John Wake was especially fortunate in having one multi-talented artist in parishioner Peter Smith — sculptor, painter, mosaicist, illuminator. He and Smith visited churches and studios reviewing, absorbing, discussing, discarding, as they began to coordinate a visual program for St. David's. Mindful of the past, especially of the strong, inventive Romanesque, and setting themselves in the present, in their geographical area among their co-sojourners in our specific Catholic milieu, they guided an evolvement of forms that work in unity (this quality cannot be emphasized enough), an unfolding of an

UNFEATHERING OUR NESTS

repair, restore, change, renew? Is the liturgical committee or parish staff already fielding questions and suggestions concerning worship aesthetics, economics?

Absolutely necessary is the participation of parishioners with parish teams and pastoral leaders in the study and opening out of meanings and rationales, of the particular

perhaps a moving out of a time-warp. These provide the generative dialectic for creative solutions.

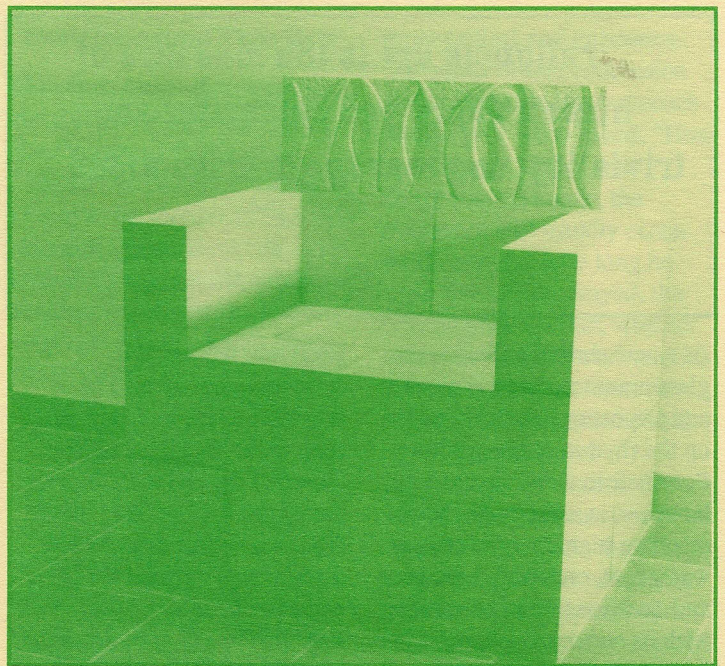
Some recent works give exciting hope in the liturgical support and the sense of worship that is generated. Sensitive yet virile is the Church of St. David the King in West Windsor (Princeton), New Jersey. Its strong feeling

artistic program that supports the liturgy with the strong participation of the congregation, and imparts a feeling of the sacred, the "inexpressible," a "refreshment for the mind and the soul."

The works in St. David's use stone, wood, terra cotta, paint, mosaic, gold leaf, and slate — nothing synthetic or imitation. As Peter Smith writes, "Classic materials are affordable if they are used the way they should be — in moderation." The altar on the main axis of the interior is of a light limestone base; figures of Christ and his Old Testament predecessors comprise a narrow band carved near the top. Over this is a thick mensa of a beautifully streaked dark green marble (which had been carried in by the parishioners themselves for the dedication). On this axis, too, the presider's chair is raised behind the altar. Above is a 4'x6' painted and gilded wood crucifix reminiscent of the thirteenth century Cimabue's work. To the side a slight recess in the wall harbors the wood and marble tabernacle recalling the ark of the Covenant in shape and symbol. On its four sides a painted and gilded desert scene blossoms into flowers, with water, doves, rainbow,

sun, moon, and angel. The baptismal font at the midpoint of the main axis, where we pass into the sacred space of the church, is also used as the holy water font. Near this is the paschal candle. The altar candles stand on the floor at the side of the altar so that the altar is only itself, not a table for candles or flowers or offerings extraneous to the eucharistic action.

The stations of the cross are small, simple earthenware squares set away from the liturgical action across a section of the back wall behind the worshipping community, each with its specific number of crosses stamped into it. Near this, also at the back, is the small shrine of the Virgin Mary, a brilliant mosaic of strong simple shapes and colors. Meaningfully, the figure of Mary, not prominent in the liturgy, is positioned directly across from the crucifix relating her to Christ. At the left of the narthex is a small chapel area for daily Mass. This is where the processional crucifix stands. During Mass this crucifix is placed in a deep architectural niche beyond the tabernacle where it isn't ambiguous as a repeated image of the permanent cross.



From the inception of planning, then, among the prime considerations are liturgical purposefulness, assembly needs in various celebrations and gatherings, the foci at different parts of the liturgy (the altar is principal), appropriate materials, the sense of unity, and simplicity. Having the artist in working contact with all from the beginning is not an ideal of *choice*, for aesthetic quality as well as for depth of faith expression. Together these develop the harmony and vitality in the contemporary idiom of a unified worshipping assembly that is uplifting and genuinely renewing.

Natural classic materials like stone or wood rather than plastics or false marbles reinforce the value of our celebration and heighten its meaning. Selectivity, not collectivity or a "grand variety," must impart the sense of both transcendence and immanence. A questionable assemblage of forms are put together when people work separately, piecemeal, or when they attempt to make everything imposing or just different.



"Liturgy's climate is one of awe, mystery, wonder, reverence, thanksgiving, and praise... It cannot be satisfied with anything less than the beautiful... Where there is evidently no care for this, there is an environment basically unfriendly to mystery and awe..."

Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

"...religious art is the measure of human depth and sincerity; any triviality, any weakness cries aloud."

Henry Adams:
Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres

At a new shrine in Florida the glass entrance doors in modern and imposing simplicity pick up the rhythm in the granite floor before them; in that area, however, is a dark wood arch reaching high over the central water font, puzzling in purpose and questionable in harmony with its surroundings, unrelated to anything else. The tabernacle at the other end of the nave is of dark wood but all other sanctuary furnishings are blond wood of an entirely different design. The crucifix over the altar is also of light wood on a plexiglass form.

Each unit has its own contemporary style. The windows in the nave are more traditional but the circular windows around the top of the nave, also "traditional," have figures so small as to be just discernible. Around the nave walls are paintings of the stations that could be from the late 19th century. The side chapel, unrelated artistically, does continue a contemporary mode in a deep blue theme of the universe. This chapel is the "gem" of the shrine and most conducive to prayer. This affluence of disparate

materials, of styles, and of basic forms, challenges unity and fosters distraction.

Let us keep in mind, then, that besides the assembly itself the altar is the prime focus. The sites of eucharistic reservation, the baptismal font, the crucifix, are to be carefully considered in relation to the people, the altar, and each other, without acting as challenges for visual attention. Probably little can be done within feasible costs about existing mosaics or paintings on walls surrounding the altar that direct thoughts, say, to Our Lady of Fatima or to St. Francis receiving the stigmata. We can, however, keep the crèche at Christmas away from the foot of the altar, and place statues or pictures away from the sanctuary area. Do not use the altar for flowers or candles (see EACW #71, 79). Check the overuse or

heavy emphasis of hangings. All that is secondary should have a unity of aesthetic to the whole. Such simplicity, by the way, does not forbid a richness of material or design (e.g., the icons of Eastern rites) which always reflects a respect and care for our world.

Decide in cooperation what the needs of this particular community are; what ways or options may respond to them; what are the resources — people of recourse (artists, etc.), funds, appropriate materials or supplies already available. Reflect, consult, look at decisions elsewhere, and aim for a *unified* sacred space that speaks of a holy presence and invites people to pray.†

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