

# word on worship

## JUSTICE: A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY

(Editor's note: We are grateful to Fr. Robert Hovda for allowing us to print the text of his General Session Address to the Twelfth Annual Congress on Parish Worship, sponsored by the Diocese of Sacramento, January 14, 1989.)

Liturgy is the act, the symbolic action, in which our sources, Bible and sacrament, come alive as our common expression and formation in the worship of a living assembly and in the context of our own times. Both biblical word and sacramental action, which are one in the liturgy, communicate a faith in one true God whose deeds and words are of liberation and reconciliation, justice and peace. Our whole Jewish and Christian history as a covenant people is a progressive unfolding of this design of God, a design for which God has made us partners: do justice...and do it in a peaceable way.

That design and command is recapitulated both at the beginning and at the end of Jesus' public ministry: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, God has anointed me. God has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord" (Lk. 4: 18-19). "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me..." (Matt. 25: 35-36). These words come from the covenant tradition of the Jewish people.

### WORD & SACRAMENT: "DO JUSTICE"

It's all so obvious in our sources — in the sacramental actions as well as in the texts. After a long immersion in the way the faith community lives, we take the candidates for initiation of Easter into the midst of the assembly, stripped of their identification with the world as it is, bathe them from head to foot, anoint them, share the Spirit with the laying on of hands, clothe them with fresh, new garments for a fresh, new life, sending them back into the world as it is to help make it what it must become. To do justice...and do it in a peaceable way.

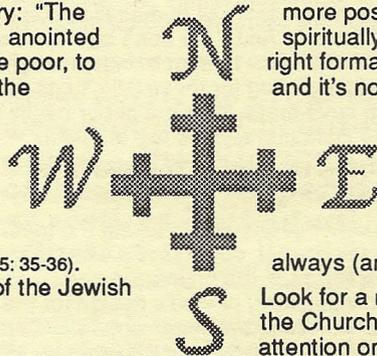
And, while that is the beginning, every Sunday we call each other back together, to express and be formed by God's covenant: all of us who believe — of every color, every class, both sexes, age, education, handicap, lifestyle, etc. — all reconciled in the proclamation of the word of the one true God and in the eating and drinking together, from a common plate and from common cups, at the common table of the Lord.

It is the overriding message of liturgy, the message of our gestures and actions as well as of our texts: to do justice...and do it in a peaceable way. So why does it seem such a problem to us — this relationship between liturgy and social justice? How did you and I become so estranged from the liturgy, our "primary and indispensable source,"...so estranged that, even though we participate in its actions and say or sing its texts, its words, we regularly miss the point?

### A WAY OF LIFE

I think we have to talk about that first before we get into the more positive aspects of the relationship. We are presently spiritually deformed, and we will never do anything about a right formation unless we first face that fact. It's not surprising and it's not all our fault, but it's a fact. So we can't get from "here" to "there". We have to *change* the "here" so that we begin to understand that in our liturgy we celebrate not a list of teachings or doctrines, but a *way of life* — the way of the Torah, the way of the prophets, the way of the covenant, the way of Jesus, the pilgrim way...which is always (and there is the rub) the way of the Cross.

Look for a moment at our annual celebration of two seasons in the Church's year: Advent and Christmas. Both focus our attention on the reign of God, the realm of justice and peace, the holy city, the new Jerusalem. "Make ready the way of the Lord, clear a straight path for our God. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill levelled. The windings shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth, and all of humanity shall see the salvation of God" (Lk. 3: 4-6). Yet such is our spiritual condition that it is quite possible (even probable) that in neither season did we find ourselves examining in terms of mission ("*Ite, missa est*") the ways we earn our livings, our voting patterns, our attitudes toward people different from ourselves in one way or another, the way we talk about them with our friends, our convictions about other social issues.



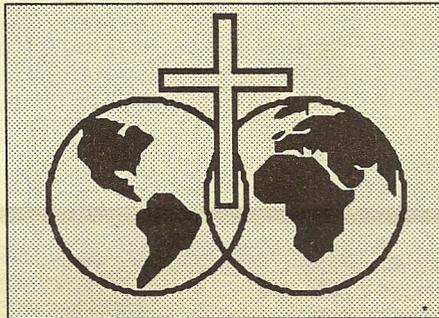
We haven't yet achieved an integration. We haven't "got it all together." The moments of our faithfulness to the one true God occur in lives which, for the most part, like those of our Jewish and Christian ancestors, are lived under the spell of idolatry. That is not only the pattern of our biblical history — it is the pattern of our history since biblical times, as well. Falling away...and coming back. Falling away...and coming back. But if our quest for the liberation and reconciliation of all humanity is part and parcel of this covenant, then it is critical that we recognize that to "fall away" is not merely to stop going to Mass but it is also to reject the mission we are given in baptism and eucharist: to do justice and to do it in a peaceable way.

It is a great gift to have covenant sources (the liturgy, which is to say, bible and sacrament) which reveal God's design and make us partners in its realization. And do it in a classic way which applies to all times and all places. No specifics. No party line. No concrete instructions for exactly what must be done here and now in politics and economics. Those things we have to work out with the rest of the human race and with the talents God has given all of us. But the direction, the orientation, the goal is clear in the word of the God who is liberator and reconciler. Everything is to be measured by that direction. It is that clear direction in our sources, as well as the ambiguity about the steps we must take today, that invites a multitude of different interpretations in the community of faith. And out of all our different insights and interpretations, we make a bit of progress here or there through a consensus. That's why at our best, as Church, we are so loathe to stifle controversy...because we are all so limited and it is through our sharing of our different interpretations of what we must do that we may eventually arrive at some common interpretations as the body of Christ.

#### **DIMINISHING THE MEANING**

This classic character of our sources — the fact that they reveal the aim but not the specifics and leave so much up to our imaginations — also can be dangerous. It makes it easy for our sins, and our sins in interpreting the covenant have created the disjunction between liturgy and justice. One of those sins is to diminish the meaning of Christ's coming, to reduce it to the dimensions of the after-life. This is one of the ways in which we have tamed, domesticated the message. The reign of God, the reign of justice and peace is for after death, when there will be no contest. Tragically, this has become the common temper of the Church, along with a fatalism about the world and its evils. In general, ask any of us what our mission is and the reply will

have to do with the narrowest notion of evangelization: getting more members for the Church. While all humans are invited to share the vision of faith and the Church's worship, that is by no means the mission assigned to the covenant people in our sources. "Justice and justice alone shall be your aim" (Dt. 16: 20). The God of Jews and Christians is the God who is known in the command to do justice. So Judith prays: "Your strength is not in numbers, nor does your power depend upon the stalwart; but you are the God of the lowly, the helper of the oppressed, the supporter of the weak, the protector of the forsaken, the savior of those without hope" (Jdt. 9: 11). Expressions like that are the refrain of the Bible. Not death but baptism is the beginning of the new kind of life to which believers commit themselves. It's a kind of "all or nothing" game we play. If we can't have perfect peace and perfect justice here and now, then we don't want



to be bothered with the little steps that lead in its direction. So we say, "It is God's gift and it will come to us when we die." But that is not what our sources say. Our sources say that our little baby steps of liberation and of reconciliation are the meaning of human life in God's covenant. And if we don't love the world and our fellow human beings enough to keep agitating for these little steps, then we have made idols out of our habits and our customs, and we are unfaithful.

#### **GOD'S DESIGN NOT A PRIVATE MATTER**

Another of our sins in taking the teeth out of the gospel, out of God's word, out of the liturgy, is the privatizing and individualizing of God's design for the world. We knew better when the Church was persecuted, but in the periods when the Church has been accepted by the powers-that-be we tend to reduce God's design to the private — to making something out of little me, but having nothing to do with politics or economics or culture or the world in general. Again, that is not what our sources tell us. If we want to think that morality is merely the way we manage our sex lives, we can — obviously, we have — and so we remain the slaves of the institutional idols of our time: the military, big business, money. It certainly simplifies life when you don't

have to contest those powers, but it is also unfaithful.

Perhaps only in our time have we had the tools, the vision, the experience of one world and the capacity to realize that the powers of the world are not fate or destiny but are our creations. We make them and we support them, so we can change them. We must change them if we would move the world along toward greater justice, greater peace. The simple, tribal, rural ways in which justice was understood in the various biblical ages could be satisfied by the private, individual act of feeding a hungry neighbor or bringing a glass of water to a thirsty one. In the world in which we now live, with all of its parts brought close, along with all of its problems, that command can be satisfied only as cities and nations and as a world that is one. The progress of the world requires a corporate, social, structural and institutional morality of all of us. What was once a glass of water in a private hand is now that and much, much more. It is taking control of the water supply of the city, nation, world and making justice, rather than profit, the norm of every stage.

As the Second Vatican Council taught, a new kind of human being is emerging in this new kind of world, who senses her or his responsibility to all the sisters and brothers and toward history. That means seeing government not as an ogre to be kept small, but as the only instrument we have for doing together what we cannot do alone. That means taking governments in hand and using our participation and power to see that they serve the needs of all, not merely the needs of the powerful. It is through the tools of government and law and the common weal that we obey God's command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. As someone has said, justice is love operating at a distance.

Yet we still want to believe that philanthropy, noblesse oblige and our handouts, our benevolent giving out of our abundance to the impoverished, are somehow the fulfillment of the Law, of our mission. On the contrary, our sources are clear: what we do not need in our abundance belongs by right to the impoverished, whether we give it to them or not. Our job is not merely to be of private assistance, but to create a society and eventually a world that enables the liberation and reconciliation of all. Leonardo Boff spoke to both sins when he wrote:

*The reign of God, the eschatological liberation of the world, is already in process, is already being established. It takes shape in concrete modifications of actual life (Passion of Christ, Passion of the World, Orbis, 1987)*

## WAY OF THE CROSS BRINGS TENSION

That is what makes our mission, our pilgrimage, our Jewish or Christian way of life a way of the cross: If we are trying to be faithful to the covenant, we find ourselves experiencing and living a *tension* as long as this life lasts: a tension between being comfortable and at home in our world as it is on the one hand, and being a gadfly, an agitator, a protester for the sort of changes that will make it more possible for more people to be liberated and reconciled, to enjoy in this life those fundamental gifts of the one true God; a tension between the world as it is and the world as it must become — that is the healthy tension of a faithful person and a faithful Church.

Because the idols of the day are always out to capture our allegiance and to divert us from doing justice and doing it peaceably, we are always falling away...and coming back. We must be patient with ourselves in our sinfulness, so that we do not give up, but rather keep repenting, keep accepting God's ever-present forgiveness and God's invitation to be open to the vision, to get out of our ruts and move on. It's simply the way life is. The moving on is more important than the pauses and the unfaithfulness, for we are pilgrims...on a journey.

Many of the enticements, many of the ways in which the idols of our time seduce us are in the biblical story and in the liturgy. When asked to succumb to the ploys of power, wealth, and friendship with the king, "Mattathias answered in a loud voice: 'Although all the Gentiles in the king's realm obey him...yet I, my family and kinsfolk, will keep to the covenant ...God forbid that we should forsake the law and the commandments...'" (1 Maccabees 2: 20-21)

Not many of us have the courage and independence to echo Mattathias' words and deeds. But it is those few — a Dorothy Day, a Martin Luther King, Jr. — who keep the Church and its mission alive to inspire the rest of us and eventually create a movement with sufficient numbers to non-violently effect social change. In other words, to be the faithful Church which King described:

*If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal...If the church does not participate actively in the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice...it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.* (NCCIJ poster)

Let me move toward a conclusion with four appeals, which I will try to keep as brief as possible:

1. Grow Up
2. Build Your Local Church

3. Be at Home in the World
4. Use Your Imagination

### 1. GROW UP

To assume the responsibility of witness and mission requires that we grow up by going to our sources in the liturgy and making them our own, as the great Second Vatican Council taught and enabled. Make the liturgy our own, so that its biblical texts and sacramental actions nourish us and form us, rather than being content to be second class members dependent on being spoonfed with the do's and don't's of clerical interpreters, however official and however gifted. We need to listen to others, but God has given us consciences, too. It is the equal and common access of all the baptized to full participation in the liturgy which enables our development as adults in the Church, not merely receiving all the time, but making a contribution as well. In a great give and take, the classic themes of liberation and reconciliation take flesh in all of us, always for the purpose of refining a position we can take together as a common witness.

If we are alienated from those primary and indispensable sources, the whole process suffers...as we see when reform is suspect rather than hailed, and when those few who struggle notably for justice and peace (and who in our best moments are the Church's saints and heroes) tend to be ostracized rather than followed. Alienation from the liturgy, from our primary source, robs us of a sense of humor about ourselves and our leaders, and throws us on the rarely-tender mercies of other interpreters, sometimes official, sometimes influenced by the powers-that-be, sometimes more concerned for order than for life. We

---

***Even when we grow up,  
we cannot be Christians  
alone. The pilgrim way  
of Jesus is a corporate  
as well as individual  
effort.***

---

respect and love our ecclesial leaders. We need pastors in the church. But we must not divinize them. We must not make stars of them, for we live in a culture which idolizes stars of every kind. The genius of the biblical covenant is our worship of one God and one God only. There is no substitute in this maturity for regular prayer and regular reading of the Bible in addition to our common liturgy. The famous theatre-piece *Mass* which opened Kennedy Center sensed this need of ours to grow up and assume responsibility in a few memorable line:

*You can lock up the bold...and hold them  
in tow,  
You can stifle all adventure for a century  
or so...  
But you cannot imprison the word of the  
Lord...  
So we wait in silent treason until reason  
is restored  
And we wait for the season of the word  
of the Lord.*

(New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1971, pp. 11-12)

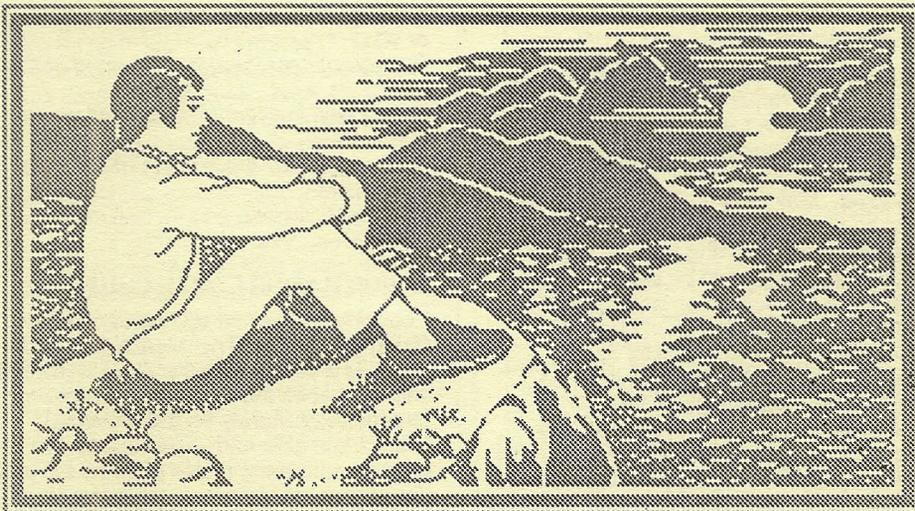
### 2. BUILD YOUR LOCAL CHURCH

Even when we grow up, we cannot be Christians alone. The pilgrim way of Jesus is a corporate as well as individual effort. Just as the Council focused our attention not merely on the universal Church but also and especially on its local constituents, it also gave us the way to revive local churches. To make them communities not only of worship but also of liberating and reconciling deeds in and for and with the larger communities around them. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and all it implies is to be the agenda of every local faith community.

We can and should all have a part in this process, old-timers and newcomers alike, experiencing shared prayer, shared problems of faith, shared planning of mission. As we had tamed the gospel, the local church tended to become merely the pious face or part of the larger community, merely a service station for dispensing sacraments to anonymous individuals. The recovery of catechumenate and initiation as a year-in, year-out agenda, as the very life of the church, is a revolution whose effect will take time to realize and is the hope of our future. That hope is to build a community as committed to liberating and reconciling deeds for the world as it is to the worship of the living God; a community of people who know that human beings are *somebodies*, and act like it; a community of people who know that justice and peace can't be accomplished alone, but require an unending restructuring of economic, political, cultural life; a community of people, in short, who are determined to change the world.

### 3. BE AT HOME IN THE WORLD

If our local church has become a ghetto, an island or a fortress to isolate or protect us from the rest of the world, it has lost its true meaning. The church is not supposed to consume all the time and sap all the energy of its members. It is supposed to be a vivifying and inspiring community which stimulates us for living elsewhere. We think of Eastern Orthodox churches as "other-worldly," but it was a great theologian of that tradition, Alexander Schmemmann, who said it straight out:



The real tragedy of Christianity is not its compromise with the world and progressive "materialism," but, on the contrary, its "spiritualization" and transformation into a "religion." And "religion" came to mean a world of pure spirituality, a concentration of attention on matters pertaining to the "soul." Christians were tempted to reject time altogether and replace it with what we call "spiritual" pursuits...to insist that time has no real meaning from the point of view of the reign of God which is "beyond time." And they finally succeeded. They left time meaningless, indeed, although full of Christian "symbols." And today we ourselves do not know what to do with these symbols. For it is impossible to "put Christ back into Christmas" if Christ has not redeemed — that is, made meaningful — time itself. (For the Life of the World, New York, National Student Christian Federation, 1963, p.32)

To be faithful then, both as individuals and as communities of faith, we are supposed to be both at home in this world of ours and critical of it, both appreciative of its beauty, gifts and progress, and protesting its injustice and violence. To love the world so much we want to change it and make it better — that is our mission...and that tension is our life.

People who are satisfied with the world as it is cannot be believers in the biblical tradition. For the Church, as the synagogue, is a pilgrim entity, called by God to prod and urge and give an example so that all of us together may move in the direction of a bit more justice and a bit more reconciliation all the time...little steps, but never satisfied, always urging on. Only by social organization, by combining human ideas and resources and energies, can we be faithful in this way. And by demanding and expecting so much of human beings, we feel better about ourselves and

everyone else.

The December 1988 issue of *The Catholic Worker* had an article about Thomas Merton which quotes his description of a memorable experience. He had left his abbey to go into Louisville on an errand, and found himself standing on a street corner simply looking at the throngs of people. He wrote about it later:

*The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream... The sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy that I almost laughed out loud...It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, though it is a race dedicated to many absurdities and one which makes terrible mistakes...I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts where...sin, desire, self-knowledge cannot reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. (Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, New York, Doubleday, pp. 140ff).*

That experience of identification with everyone else on the planet is a necessary one for believers, because it is the beginning of justice as well as of reconciliation. It reminds us why the assembly is an essential part of eucharist and why eucharist is an ecclesial rather than a household feast — a gathering of all of us different types, different persons who are yet deeply, deeply one and who must learn to act like it. The vision of the eucharist is to bring together in a sharing more equitable than anything we have thus far achieved, in mutual care, female and male, old and young, rich and poor, hungry and well-fed, sheltered and living on the street, educated and not, jobless and working, persons of every color, class and culture, straight and lesbian

and gay, contemplative and activist, smart and slow, good-looking and plain, mainstream and on the outside looking in, influential and without the currency of power. Where else but in the liturgy can you and I experience so strong and moving a witness to our commonness and to the possibility of a conversion that will make the freedom and the oneness (already given us) the spirit and the purpose of all our structures, institutions and ways? As Jesus never tired of teaching: this mixed lot *is* our family.

#### 4. USE YOUR IMAGINATION

We know how far we are from that baptismal and eucharistic vision. But we have imaginations, you and I. Humanity has proved its capacity to imagine and invent. Liturgy exceeds the limits of the merely verbal and rational, touches every sense and faculty which we possess, and therefore evokes faculties which may be diminished and even paralyzed in our military, money-centered culture...especially the faculty of imagination.

More than any other human faculty, it is imagination which frees us from the heavy hand of our habits, our customary ways of doing things, our status quo...so that we can envision new possibilities — in this case the liberation and reconciliation of God's reign. Those gifts do not and can not come all at once. Our steps — not only in opening ourselves to the formation God offers us in our liturgical source so that we too experience Merton's identification with everyone, but also in accepting as faith communities the corporate mission to work at changing the political, economic, cultural structures of our world — our steps are always tiny and we may not see results. Each step of progress makes us more sensitive to problems yet unsolved. Except in faith's vision, we will not see the goal. It is enough for us to be a small, small part of such a process.

#### CHANGE OUR HEARTS...

Most of the human race lives daily with hearts so burdened that only concrete changes in the economic and political conditions of their lives can lift despair. Living and preaching the good news, we are beginning to understand, is nothing less than changing radically our hearts and our social systems and institutions. The mission God has given us cannot be defined, even in these pious surroundings, by the likes of us. Our mission can be defined, as Jesus defines it, only by "the lowly," "the brokenhearted," "captives," "prisoners," and "all who mourn." ❀

Rev. Robert Hovda

---

# LIVING THROUGH MYSTAGOGIA

## "Getting to Heaven at Last"

I have celebrated tons of weddings during my priesthood. Each and everyone of them has been a beautiful and moving experience. Many months ahead of the wedding day, anxious brides-and-grooms-to-be call the rectory to check on everything from the readers for the celebration to asking about the length of the aisle for the white runner. Understandably, everything usually runs smoothly and the bride and groom eventually zip-off to their honeymoon rarely to be seen by the celebrant again. However, on certain occasions, it is always a great joy to see the couple again, especially at Sunday Mass, a parish celebration or eventually the baptism of their first child. I was thinking however, how strange it is that after all the months of wedding details and preparation, no couples I've ever married has returned from their honeymoon, asking me to reflect with them on their wedding experience. Other priests may have had similar experiences that as humans we are very good at preparing, anticipating and executing, but, we're not so great about "reflecting." We're more concerned about "doing" than "having done." The art of remembering sometimes can be painful, because we pick and choose what we wish to remember after a period of time has elapsed causing the memory some distortion. Early reflection can help memory lapses and allow our new experiences to be the best they can be: solid joys and lasting gifts.

This is why "the third step of Christian initiation, the celebration of the Sacraments, is followed by the final period, the period of post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy. This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the eucharist, and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in the newness of life, the community of the faithful, their god-parents, and their pastors should give them thoughtful and friendly help" (#244/37 RCIA).

This growth which the Rite speaks of is rooted in the understanding of the "new perception" which the neophyte has received through their initiatory experience. **Perception** by its definition has to do with "having or showing insight and sensitive understanding". "Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they (the neophytes) derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church, and of the world" (#245/38 RCIA). This new perception is not (nor should it be) indigenous not only to the neophytes but to the entire Church as an initiating assembly.

Father Aidan Kavanagh hazarded a guess in 1974 that when historians look back at our era, they will see the RCIA as the single most important result of Vatican II. He said this not because of its ritual changes but because of the robust vision of the Church contained in the rite. Perhaps this is especially true in our own country, because we were for so long an immigrant Church whose time was taken up with caring for our own. We have not had a very vital sense of being the Church for the sake of others, for the salvation of the world. We need to recover that God has called us to be instruments for the salvation of others. The most important question the Gospel asks us is not whether we are saved but whether God can use us to save others. This

perception is at times quite different from the image of the Church that many of our parishioners have, a quite different Church than we have known in the concrete day-to-day experiences of our parish living-out of the Gospel. Maybe this is one of the reasons why many of our parishes have not taken the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults seriously over the past fifteen years. To embrace the RCIA is to commit ourselves to a radical renewal of our life as the Church.

It is here where the Rite is right on target when it says simply yet powerfully "Since the distinctive spirit and power of the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy derive from the new, personal experience of the sacraments and of the community, its main setting is the so-called Masses for neophytes, that is, the Sunday Masses of the Easter season (#247/40/235). All the neophytes and their godparents should make an effort to take part in the Masses for the neophytes and the entire local community should be invited to participate with them. Special places in the congregation are to be reserved for the neophytes and their godparents. To close the period of postbaptismal catechesis some sort of celebration should be held at the end of the Easter season. For us, here, in the Archdiocese of Newark it will be held as a day of recollection on Saturday, May 19th, 1990 at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Maplewood, from the hours between 10 am to 3 pm. It will be at that celebration that the Archbishop will preside as the Rite suggests "to show his pastoral concern for these new members of the Church."

Seemingly the period of mystagogia is the most difficult to execute because there is no true "blueprint" of execution or implementation in the Rite itself. All it gives us are the principles of catechesis for us to draw our own implications and creative opportunities to give the Rite flesh and blood.

As we wrestle with the mystagogical period of being the ultimate rite of passage, there are two areas which we would always establish in our catechesis. First, is the need for the neophyte to realize the imperative to become involved in the ministerial life of the Church. It is an opportunity to emphasize the basic liturgical principle that all ministry in the Church flows from our common baptism, not from seniority or any status one may hold within the Christian community. This is such a basic right of the neophyte that it needs to be mentioned at this time. There may be some members of the parish who may not understand how a neophyte can teach CCD, be a member of the parish council, minister at the altar or become a minister of hospitality. This attitude is a very important pastoral principle which is the spirit of evangelization which should pervade all parish activities, especially during the time of the mystagogical experience. This spirit of evangelization challenges any sense of smugness or complacency, and constantly raises the questions: Who is missing? Who does not feel welcome? Who has yet to hear the good news of God's love and mercy?

The second concern for us who work with neophytes during the mystagogia is allowing them the luxury of choosing a spiritual director.

"Instead of getting to heaven at last, I'm going all along!"

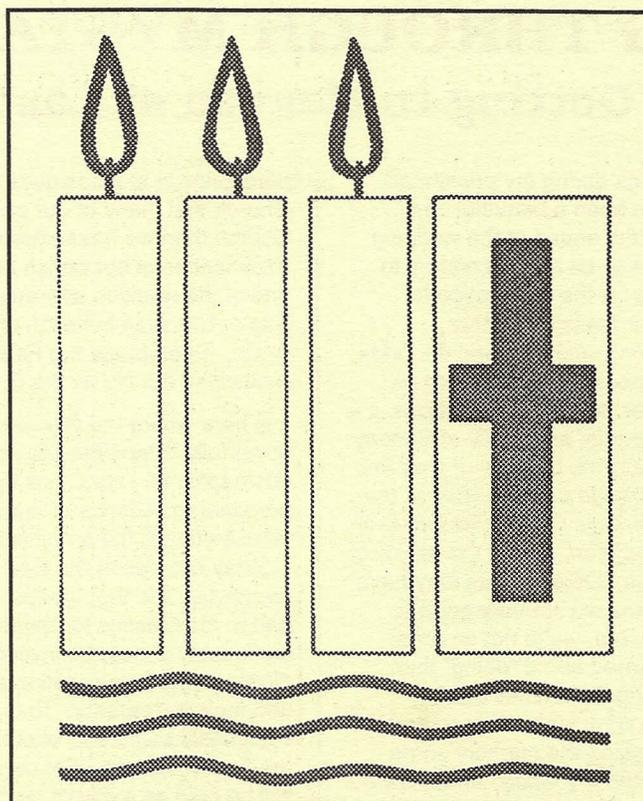
We normally don't turn to an American poet like Emily Dickinson

for spiritual advice. But in these final lines of one of her popular poems, I see a terse, modern and wholesome summary of the spiritual life. In fact, our best spiritual writers today are echoing Emily Dickinson's sage formula, written over a century ago. For they don't see "heaven" or the coming of the "Kingdom" simply as the end of a long search but something found "in the going" as well. Neophytes are in their spiritual infancy. We as priests, directors, sponsors and team members need to help them mold a spirituality. After the journey, just experienced, the neo-phyte may wish to settle awhile and rest. Developing a spirituality may be the last thing on his or her mind. That is why, it is up to us to pose the question to the neophytes: What is spirituality? Is it simply the "art of growing closer to God"? For the Christian that means following Christ's footsteps to the Father in the poem of the Spirit. It is important that we integrate our journey to God. Unless we so unify our lives that they are a simple going toward the Father in Jesus' footsteps, there is a split, a kind of schizophrenia between our day-to-day living and our so-called spiritual life. If I am always doing things in order to get to heaven, I have failed to make my life a joyful "going all along". I have not embraced my getting there as lovingly as I have embraced my final destination.

Spirituality, for me, is the slow work of God's grace bringing together body and soul in each of us. When the two merge in our consciousness as they are in reality, and we embrace that merging and love it, then we are on the way; and our going to heaven is as beautiful as our arriving there. It falls upon us to open the neophyte's world to the power of this reality called: spiritual direction.

Several contemporary views of spiritual direction can illuminate this ministry's particular value and place within the RCIA. In *Inviting the Mystic, Supporting the Prophet*, Kathryn Dyckman and L. Patrick Carroll, define spiritual direction as "an interpersonal relationship in which one person assists others to reflect on their own experience in the light of who they are called to become in fidelity to the Gospel". The very structure of the ministry, an interpersonal relationship in which one person assists others to reflect on their own experience in the light of who they are called to become in fidelity to the Gospel. The very structure of the ministry, an interpersonal relationship, well suits the RCIA. It evokes as well the model of interpersonal relationships found in the Gospels through which women and men came to believe and then continued to grow in their faith.

The relationship is one of assistance. The specific ways in which spiritual direction resembles and can learn from other contemporary helping relationships include the primacy of a mature commitment on the part of the director, the need for



effective listening and effective response and the capacity to be genuinely one's self in the relationship. One current book *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by William Barry and William Connolly, develops several chapters on "Aspects of the Relationship between Director and Directee."

Individual spiritual direction can serve the individual and the entire community of faith by respecting the individual's freedom and as one loved and called by God. It can provide lived experience of the truth that the ongoing development of faith is not for the elite but for all Christians. It can contribute to the development of an integrated spiritual life which unites the personal, the interpersonal and the societal with the neophyte's experience. Finally, it can guard against the individualism illusion and overenthusiasm which occasionally accompany religious experience. Thus, in that journey

of faith which is the RCIA, individual spiritual direction can offer a loving strengthening support for each individual and a wise and faithful discernment for the individual's response to that call.

Emily Dickinson's poem concludes with "instead of getting to heaven at last, I'm going all along" is a poem about the real division between a false piety and true religion, between external shell and inner heart; and trying to keep body and soul separate in my mind leads precisely to that, a false piety acted out by the body that is not really in touch with who I am inside.

It would be a shame if all of our efforts on behalf of the neophytes throughout our parishes would end in naught because we didn't take our mystagogia to its logical conclusion: "Getting to Heaven at Last". ♣

Rev. Michael A. Merlucci  
Director RCIA,

Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark

### Staff

Editor: Carol Willis

#### Editorial Board:

Joan Conroy, Msgr. Richard Groncki, Rev. Charles Gusmer, Dr. Zeni Fox, Katherine Kuzma, Sr. Judy Mertz SC, Sr. Marlene Milasus OSB, Rev. Charles Miller, Sr. Gerardine Mueller OP, William Shlala

#### Contributors:

Rev. Robert Hovda, Rev. Michael Merlucci, Sr. Milasus OSB, and the staff of the Worship Office

### Subscription Information

One year subscription to *Word on Worship*, 6 issues, \$5.00. Special Bulk rate, five or more issues to the same address, \$4.50 per year per subscription. Foreign subscription, \$6.50

# Perspectives: Communion in Spirit & Song

Once upon a time, the administration of a large and famous university hired a landscaper to plan new walkways across the campus. The grounds committee of the university became increasingly impatient with the landscaper, however, because she delayed so long in submitting a design. She spent several weeks living on campus, mingling with the students and apparently producing none of the work for which she had been hired. Finally, the chairman of the grounds committee called in the landscaper and demanded the reason for this delay. The landscaper wordlessly handed the chairman a blueprint and explained that there was no point in planning walkways until she knew where the students usually liked to walk on their way from building to building. Otherwise, the university would pay for new sidewalks and the students would continue to walk on the lawn! Her wisdom proved correct.

## Singing a Priority

At times, we may wonder if liturgical "designers" forgot to watch the congregation when making liturgical directives, and we may find this particularly a concern at communion. Songs are taught and scheduled into the celebration; people are encouraged by documents and by liturgists to sing on their way to receive the sacrament; and yet somehow it doesn't seem to be working. Why is singing at communion considered such a priority? And if it is such a priority, why don't Catholics, by and large, like to sing at communion? Finally, what can we do about the whole thing?

That singing is the rubrically "correct" thing to do during the communion procession is easily seen by a quick look at the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*:

*During the priest's and the faithful's reception of the sacrament the communion song is sung. Its function is to express outwardly the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to give evidence of joy of heart, and to make the procession to receive Christ's body more fully an act of community...the communion song should be ended in good time whenever there is to be a hymn after communion (GIRM, 56i).*

The *Instruction* then makes provision for use of antiphons from either the *Graduale Romanum* or the *Simple Gradual*, "by the choir alone or by the choir or cantor with the congregation." A brief paragraph follows in which the document allows for recitation of the communion antiphon "if there is no singing."

If one is accustomed to reading liturgical documents, one can easily glean from this that the preferred practice, the norm, is certainly congregational singing at communion. Our own US bishops have integrated this understanding into their document *Music in Catholic Worship* when they cite the communion song as one of the "principal texts" during the Rite of Communion. Both our theology of Church and theology of liturgy, intimately related, have moved in a direction that validates such an understanding.

Postconciliar theology has been enriched by an increased awareness of the sacramental experience as a community event. This is hardly an innovation; like so many of the "changes" wrought by Vatican II, this communal awareness is less a "modernization" than a return to a more traditional approach to liturgy — a tradition that comes not from the 400 year old mandates of the Council of Trent, but from the 2000 year old approach of the earliest Christians. (This, by the way, is

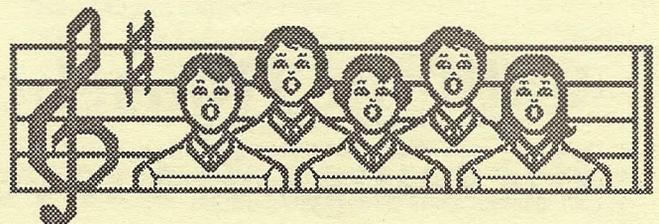
why those who propose the Tridentine Mass as the "traditional" form of Catholic worship are badly in need of a history lesson!)

## Personal, Communal - A Balance

In fact, the "vertical" dimension of the sacramental moment, which articulates my individual, personal encounter with the Risen Eucharistic Lord, must be balanced by the "horizontal" dimension. It is only in the communal context that the personal encounter takes place, and our celebrations, if done well, help to form us into a community. Then too there is the theology of pilgrimage, which reminds us that the community en route to the reception of the Eucharistic bread and cup is precisely a *pilgrim* community — and pilgrims tend to sing on the journey!

Problems begin when one takes the individual or horizontal aspect (*my* encounter) and thinks of it as a "private" moment. It is surely personal for me as an individual, but it is not private. To view communion as "Jesus and me" while the rest of Mass is "Jesus and us" is to upset the balance rather severely. Communion is, after all, both personal and communal, both vertical and horizontal.

There is a healthy tension which rightly belongs to our sacramental experiences. The sacraments, after all, take ordinary words and objects (bread, wine, oil, water) and create a sort of suffusion of the transcendent within these very immanent objects. To look upon Eucharist purely as a fellowship meal is to exaggerate the immanent; to look upon Eucharist as a transcendent experience of hushed awe is to exaggerate in the other direction.



This same tension is present, and should be present, at the moment when we approach the Eucharistic table in procession. It is not an either-or proposition; there is no magical line of demarcation between vertical and horizontal. Eucharist is both communal and personal, both immanent and transcendent, both horizontal and vertical, and we must give simultaneously due honor to both sides of the contrast.

So much for the theology of the issue; what about music itself? To look at the place of music during the communion procession cannot be done without looking at the place of music in the liturgy as a whole. We are told by conciliar documents and by subsequent legislation from our own US bishops that music is both *integral* (belonging to the nature of liturgy) and *ministerial* (existing for the sake of the liturgy and the assembly). Music is not a frill, therefore; it does not exist as an embellishment for festive occasions. At the same time, it must serve the demands of the rite and the needs of the worshiping community.

We need some creative and adaptive solutions to a sturdy resistance to singing that is still operative at communion time. A combination of factors undoubtedly creates this resistance and a

combination of solutions is surely needed to counteract it — to maintain the communal-musical nature of Eucharist and yet to minister to the varying needs of our assemblies.

#### Some Suggestions

Perhaps a few suggestions could be made in order to honor all aspects of the Eucharistic experience:

1. We need to educate our congregations and liturgical ministers more thoroughly in sacramental theology, in particular, the integral/ministerial function of liturgical music.
2. We need to provide pleasing and effective congregational music that follows the suggestion made in both documents and liturgical handbooks; the communion processional should always have a responsorial structure, enabling the assembly to sing easily and without hymnal in hand during the procession. Verses can be sung by cantor or choir so as to facilitate this. Unless our people consistently *experience* communion as a musical moment, they will never *perceive* it as such. *Lex orandi, lex credendi.*

3. We need to look at the overall structure of the liturgy to see if it suggests alternative procedures that honor both pastoral need and liturgical correctness. For one thing, the difficulty may really be less the existence of music than the non-existence of sufficient silence at key points in the liturgy. When this writer hears people bemoaning the lack of "mystery" in our contemporary liturgy, it often really translates into a lack of substantial shared silence. So greater attention to silence, especially after the communion song, may be helpful.

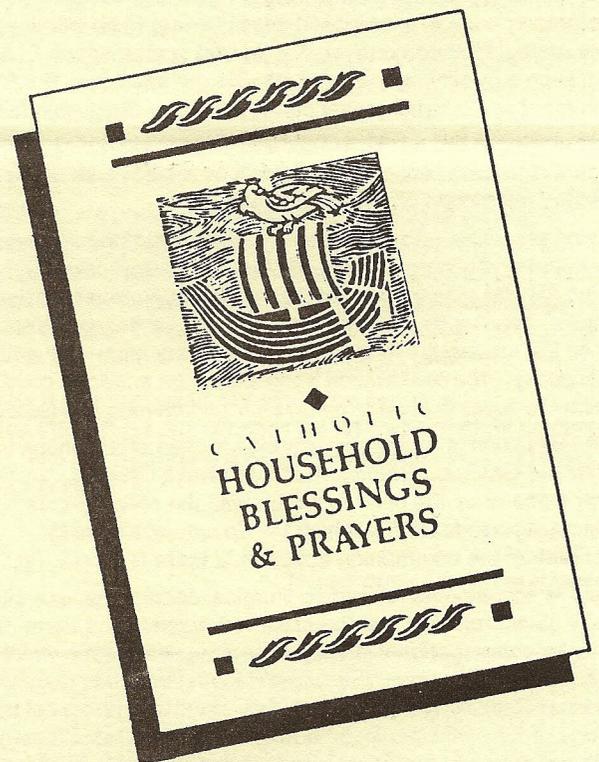
There is no perfect liturgy because there is no perfect congregation and no perfect community experience. There are, however, the wise and authentic traditions of a 2000 year old celebrating Church and many creative ways to make these traditions consistently operative in the worship experience of our assemblies. Like the landscaper at the university, we need to respect both realities of objective structure and of human need. The communion processional song seems an ideal place to start! ❖

Sr. Marlene Milasus, OSB

Available now from the  
Worship Office:

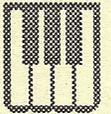
## Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers

Regular Price:	\$18.95 each
Worship Office Reduced Price(s)	\$14.95 each \$13.95 each for 10 or more
Phone Orders:	201   596-4280 Monday thru Friday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm





# NOTEWORTHY



(With the vast amount of new music available today, it is often difficult to review each piece personally. Sr. Marlene Milasus OSB, our music editor performs this task for us occasionally. We hope you find the information helpful.)

## ASSEMBLY/CHOIR SELECTIONS

### From Oregon Catholic Press

- 7124 Sing to the World *Sands*  
(interesting melodic turns,  
various performance possibilities)
- 7161 All That is Hidden *Farrell*  
(Lent-Easter)
- 7167 God of the Living Tamblyn  
(Easter)
- 7175 Alleluia! Hurry the Lord is Near *Sands*  
(Advent)
- 7195 Prepare Ye *Dean*  
(Advent)
- 8137 Come and Praise the Lord *DeBruyn*
- 8413 In Perfect Charity DeBruyn  
(based on Prayer of St. Francis)
- 8718 There is One Lord *Alstott*  
(Initiation, Easter Vigil)
- 8810 Father of Mercy *Alstott*  
(SATB or 2 voices, trumpet)
- 8967 God's Holy Family *Schiavone*  
(festive setting)

### From World Library Publications

- 7961 We Shall Be Changed *Ward*
- 7962 The One Same Spirit *Ward*
- 8509 We Gather Together *arr. Schiavone*  
(familiar tune, arr. SATB - trumpet)
- 8510 I Will Sing to the Lord *Goemanne*  
(sung as a round)
- 8511 Jesus Still Lives *Toolan*  
(fine melody)
- 8513 Descants for Easter *Joncas*  
(alleluias in abundance!)

## SERVICE MUSIC

### From Oregon Catholic Press

- 9053 Glory to God *Ford*  
(an assertive little piece!  
Good for the one-time crowd that  
needs a repeating refrain)
- 8985 Our Father *Bridge*  
(cantor/choir/assembly; should this  
be taken out of the assembly's domain  
at Eucharist? Does the elaborateness  
of the setting make it overshadow more  
significant musical moments like the  
acclamations? Would this piece be better  
suited to a non-Eucharistic setting,  
perhaps a prayer service?)

- 9164 "Our Lady of the Snows" *Dufford*  
Eucharistic Acclamations  
(melodically interesting, and an especially  
challenging but not inaccessible Holy  
Memorial departs somewhat from  
Sacramentary text. Amen includes plain and  
festive settings with Lenten adaptations.)

## PSALMS

### From Oregon Catholic Press

- 7147 Taste and See (Psalm 33) *Walker*  
(effective but challenging melody)
- 8997 Song of Forgiveness (psalm 51) *Loomis*  
(quite singable, although the rhythm  
does not seem to match the mood)
- 9062 I Will Praise You, Lord (Psalm 30) *Ridge*  
(interesting melody on verses)

### From World Library Publications

- 7678 Give Thanks to the Lord *Ward*  
(Psalm 117)
- 8512 Trust God (Psalm 62) *Chepponis*  
(sturdy melody, challenging verses)

## HISPANIC/BILINGUAL MUSIC

### From Oregon Catholic Press

- 8888 Soy Feliz (Joy is Mine) *Mateu*  
(melody perhaps a bit tiresome)
- 9110 Pan de Vida *Hurd*  
(good Communion choice both  
structurally and textually)  
Collection: Everlasting Your Love *Hurd*  
(music for Eucharist, worth looking into)

## MUSIC FOR LITURGY OF THE HOURS

### From Oregon Catholic Press

- 7160 We Shall Draw Water *Inwood*  
(Isaiah 12 canticle)
- 8969 Magnificat: God Who is Mighty *Schiavone*  
(challenging verses for cantor,  
tuneful refrain for assembly)

## OTHER

### From Oregon Catholic Press

- 7122 Litany of the Spirit *Inwood*  
(Confirmation, Pentecost, etc)

# Word on Worship

## Newsletter

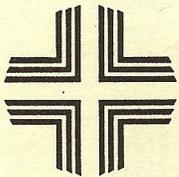
---

### *In This Issue:*

- **Justice: A Pilgrim's Journey**  
Liturgy & Social Justice
- **Living Through Mystagogia**  
Getting tro Heaven at Last
- **Communion in Spirit & Song**

### *Future Issues*

- **Children's Catechumenate**
- **Celebrating Easter**
- **American Saints**
- **Celebrations of the Word**
- **Liturgy as Prayer**
- **Marriage**



Worship Office  
100 Linden Avenue  
Irvington, NJ 07111

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 5406  
Newark, NJ

---