

word on worship

Preparing for 1992: Should Catholic Parishes Celebrate Columbus?

The year 1492 is so well known to every American that its very utterance causes all types of reactions. Sure, it reminds everyone of the voyage of Christopher Columbus. But what shall we call that trip? The discovery of America? The beginning of the European invasion? The answers given by local Catholics and their liturgical assemblies should be a matter of great concern to every pastoral leader.

The episcopal conferences in the Americas have decided to focus on 1992 as the fifth centenary of the evangelization of the Americas. The bishops of our own country have taken steps to encourage local celebrations and to stimulate activities in a "decade of evangelization" leading to the beginning of the third millennium. Columbus's voyage in 1492 was not undertaken for missionary purposes, but it soon was followed by the arrival of many religious and diocesan clergy, indeed by whole communities looking for new beginnings in Christianity.

The National Council of Churches, through a resolution of its governing board, has taken quite a different approach to the anniversary:

What represented newness of freedom, hope and opportunity for some was the occasion for oppression, degradation and genocide for others. For the church this is not a time for celebration, but a time for a committed plan of action ensuring that this kairos moment in history not continue to cosmetically coat the painful aspects of the American history of racism.... (reprinted in full in *Origins* 20, no. 11, August 16, 1990)

Still another approach has been signaled by the powerful National Catholic Educational Association. The poster for its 1992 convention in Saint Louis (annually the largest

Catholic convention) shows a dramatic rendering of Columbus's ship and calls those who shape our educational priorities to "Come Discover with Us."

Throughout the United States, activities are being planned by local and state committees as well as by the national Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission (created by an act of Congress, with members appointed by President Reagan). Tall ships will converge on Boston and New York, commemorative coins are being minted and parades will allow communities to express once more the same civic enthusiasm and patriotism seen everywhere this summer. Within Catholic circles, the Daughters of Isabella and the Knights of Columbus already have begun the festivities.

••• Not to Respond Is to Respond

That old phrase from a 1960s poster is just as correct in this case as it was 30 years ago. Pastors parish pastoral councils, catechists liturgists and parish assemblies as a whole must find their way to mark 1992. Without an ecclesial gathering or program, the only words heard by our children will be those emanating from the civic rostrum. Or, in some cases, the local community will hear radically divergent views and uncivil countercharges between groups: Native Americans versus Knights of Columbus or angry preachers hurling the NCC resolution at Cub Scouts marching down Main Street.

Here is where the parish community can make a positive contribution to civil discourse and to the shaping of national identity. In deciding to take on this topic and in not leaving the consciousness-shaping to others, parishes also might grow in their awareness of what it means to be a Catholic in America.

Each parish's planning should be undertaken with a clear understanding of at least the main lines of local history from 1492 to the emergence of the United States as we now know it. Pastoral responses can be framed in the light of questions such as these:

- What native peoples were in the local area? The voyage was a "discovery" only from the European perspective. In most parts of the United States, the aboriginal peoples were what we now call "American Indians"—a general designation for varied tribes or nations. Other natives were (and are) not Indians at all. The Inuit (Eskimo) peoples and other smaller groups still remind us of the diverse population present before 1492.

- Which European power held sway in the local region? Spanish Catholics were prevalent in Florida and the Southwest. French Catholics came via Quebec to almost all of the areas on either side of the Mississippi and around the Great Lakes. English Protestants colonized the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states, with a few Catholics present in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Smaller groups of Russians and Dutch came to our land as well. The political, linguistic and religious heritage of each region holds enormous importance as the significance of 1492 is examined. The arrival of the Europeans and their methods of settlement and evangelization were quite varied—these factors are central to the commemorations planned.

- How did the gospel come to this region? Were the first preachers and communities Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox? When was the first celebration of the eucharist and other Catholic sacraments in the area? When does the local diocese commemorate its foundation? The answers to these and similar questions help planners to understand the chain of events after 1492, so that they can set the best dates for programs in 1992.

- How far back can local governmental structures be traced? Was the town incorporated in 1630? Does the state identity go back to an original colony? Is this a "new" state? The real consciousness of identity shared by a given populace usually is carried by all Catholic citizens as well. And the way Catholics will celebrate their faith history at this moment will make a contribution to the ongoing evolution of local consciousness of who we are as Americans.

- What are the local memories of the times after Columbus? What memories need reconciliation, sorrow or lament? What are the particular anniversaries of joyous moments?

••• The Catholic Heritage of Reconciliation

The praises of Columbus and of America will be everywhere in 1992. The bishops have called for Catholic churches to make their contribution by seeing and celebrating the heritage of evangelization in this hemisphere. A liturgical forum for expressing genuine lament seems to be just as necessary.

Through the vocabulary of repentance, we come closest to the Christian response to painful history. Such penitence is not morbid, accusatory or unbecoming for a national jubilee or anniversary.

Penance does more than point to sins of the past; it lets the gathered community praise the God of all mercies and gifts. It frames the assembly in the image world, in the hymns and prayers, which let them be pulled to the New Jerusalem, to the time of fullness when all will be in harmony. Any liturgy helps form communities of faith, but penitential praise of God provides an even clearer invitation to renewal. As stated in the introduction to the Rite of Penance, penitential services invite parishes to conversion and renewal of life. They announce our freedom from sin through the death and resurrection of Christ (#36).



Americans may go to civic events celebrating Columbus, but when the Christians of the Americas gather as Christians, they must turn to God as the source of freedom, to the blood of the cross as our reconciliation. The Puritans of Plymouth are known mainly for their inauguration of autumnal Thanksgiving. Yet they resisted the institutionalization of this emotion into an annual holiday. They preferred the observance of "days of humiliation," when they could confess their shortcomings and seek forgiveness. Such days were decreed by the governor of the colony and later of the commonwealth of Massachusetts up to this very century. The people there are not more morbid or repentant than others. Rather, the folks who spawned the *mythos* of Thanksgiving knew that a holiday given over just to praise would quickly become praise of society, not praise of God. For the latter to happen, lament and reconciliation must be given conscious expression.

Catholics bring particular strengths to the planning of reconciliation services. Our heritage annually provides us with a grand season of renewal and repentance, Lent. Our liturgical books are rich in prayers, scriptures, hymns, homilies and images of sorrow and reconciliation. Whatever the particular shape of the painful history in a given parish's region, whatever the heritage of evangelization, whatever the legacy of slavery and racism, the fifth centenary of evangelization can inspire us to show communities how to find a future in a merciful God.

••• Parish Celebration of Reconciliation

The 1992 *Sourcebook for Sundays and Seasons*, available now, provides extensive notes and an outline for a parish celebration of reconciliation in 1992. As noted there, the date for such a service or for a series of liturgies (in school, in church, etc.) will depend on many factors, particularly the anniversaries that seem to need the most healing in a local region. Precedence also should be given to the days and hours when the most members can gather.

••• Other Parish Celebrations

Many parish pastoral councils and pastoral ministers are planning the general outlines of the activity year 1991-1992 now. Indeed, many already know the major events that will occur. It is high time to see what can be done in addition to a reconciliation service. Some of the options to be evaluated include:

- planning possible ecumenical or interfaith events for the quincentennial;
- collaborating in civic gatherings (not just to have a nice invocation prayer, but to help set a tone that is more respectful to the prior presence of native peoples);
- adding components on Catholic history in the United States to religious-education curricula;
- holding discussions with the appropriate local bodies about pastoral plans: with the liturgy committee, the education commission, the history or archives group, the parish pastoral councils;
- sharing bibliographic resources with pastoral staff members and homilists;
- setting up field trips for local school groups to places of significance in the history of both Native Americans and European immigrants;
- commissioning local historians to prepare bulletin inserts on local history;
- reflecting on local history as "salvation history" (even in our sinful ways God works);

- preparing a petition or two to be repeated in the general intercessions through the year;
- reviewing the Mass prayers commissioned for 1992 and other materials provided by the US bishops in *Hope and Heritage* (USCC, 1991); and, finally;
- showing great care concerning what this is to be called, avoiding all vocabulary about "discovery."

Time spent in such planning this summer might allow the local parish to make its own specifically Catholic contribution to American consciousness. Our history since 1492 is no more painful or ambiguous than any other five-century period. But it is the period that framed our national sense of purpose. We can help our communities expand and deepen their notions of liberty and justice for all. We not only inherit history. We shape it. Do not leave such solemn duties to the national Quincentennial Jubilee Commission.*

G. Thomas Ryan

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The Use of the "Unity Candle" at Weddings

In March 1991 the members of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy asked its Secretariat to address the issue of the use of the "Unity Candle" in the marriage liturgy. Accordingly, the following statement was prepared by the Secretariat staff and was approved for publication by the NCCB Liturgy Committee at its meeting in Saint Paul, MN, on June 17, 1991.

With the recent publication by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of a second revised edition of the Rite of Marriage, it is appropriate that a serious study of and reflection upon wedding practices and customs currently observed in the United States be undertaken with a view toward identifying those elements in the rite which require further catechesis of the Christian faithful. Similarly, practices which have arisen popularly during the past twenty years should be studied and, if found to be appropriate they should be proposed as possible adaptations of the marriage liturgy for use in this country. The unity candle is one such practice which falls into this latter category.

Shortly after the first edition of the revised Rite of Marriage was published in English (1969), it was proposed that the ceremonial lighting of a large candle from two smaller candles, held by the bride and groom, be included in the marriage rite after the exchange of vows or after communion. In the ensuing years this practice, although never formally approved, has become fairly common. The rite apparently comes from an Eastern European context and has the intention of showing that the "two become one flesh" through the sacrament of marriage.

This popular practice raises several questions which call for reflection. The liturgical use of candles, other than for producing light itself, is most commonly related to seeing the lighted candle as a symbol of the light of Christ. This is epitomized in the Easter Vigil in the use of the paschal candle and in the lighting of the people's candles the beginning of the liturgy. As the paschal candle is lighted, the priest prays: "May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds." The holding of lighted candles for the renewal of the baptismal promises harkens back to the rite of baptism when a lighted candle is given to a newly baptized adult or to the parents or godparents of an infant. As this is done, the

minister says: "You have been enlightened by Christ. Walk always as children of the light . . ." This same symbolism is found in the rite for the dedication of a church when the deacon receives a lighted candle from the bishop so that he may light the candles at the altar; the bishop says: "Light of Christ shine forth in the Church and bring all nations to the fullness of truth." Similarly, in popular celebrations of Evening Prayer, the use of the lucernarium service (lighting of a large candle and prayer of thanksgiving) recalls the Light of Christ in the darkness of the night.

Considering this liturgical usage of candles, what is the symbolism of lighting one larger candle from two smaller ones, which are then extinguished? If the larger candle does not represent Christ, what does it symbolize? The couple? If so, it seems to be a variance with liturgical tradition. And if the two smaller candles are meant to represent the individual baptized Christians entering this marriage, should not that symbolization be made explicit,

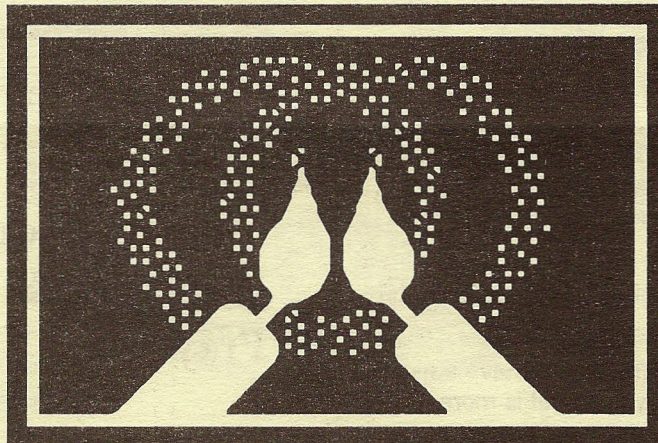
such as, by the bride and the groom each carrying their candle in the entrance procession? And are those individual lives in some way "snuffed out" when the two who have become one in Christ extinguish their candles?

If the larger candle represents Christ, should it not be burning from the very beginning of the liturgy? The light of Christ does not come from the couple, but rather is

shared with the couple. If this symbolism is the intended one, the couples' candles should be lighted from the "Christ candle" and stand next to it as a sign that the unity of the couple comes from Christ. For they are united with each other by being united in Christ.

One of the greatest criticisms of the "unity candle" is that it is not integrated into the liturgy and has to be explained in some detail when it is used. Its use should flow out of the very rites of the liturgy and not appear as something added on but not connected to the actions and prayers of the liturgy.

The Bishops' Committee on the liturgy invites liturgical commissions and interested individuals to reflect upon the use of the unity candle, both its positive and negative features, and to communicate their thoughts to the Committee.*



Celebrating Marriage: Secular Ceremonies in Sacred Places

"Here comes the bride!" As the music begins all eyes turn to see the fourteen bridesmaids walk hesitantly toward the fourteen ushers lined up along the front pew. The photographer is firmly in control, planted like an oak in the center aisle. As each bridesmaid approaches, he signals that she halt so he can take a picture. The entrance procession dutifully stops all fourteen times to allow the pictures to be taken.

Finally, eleven minutes later, after all the bridesmaids are seated, the bride enters with her father. The photographer flashes a picture as she enters through the door. He then runs up the aisle to be in position for her photo-opportunity at mid-aisle and then races forward to be in position for the removal of her veil at the head of the center aisle, where a eight-foot high floral arch has been erected blocking the view of the assembly.

Finally the bride and the all-but-forgotten groom approach the altar on which two large pots of flowers and three candles have been arranged. The soloist begins to sing "I Did It My Way". And so it continues....non-scriptural readings, candle lightings, floral presentations, non-christian wedding vows, popular love songs—secular ceremonies in sacred places.

Brides and grooms, relatives, friends and wedding guests can enter and leave some of our churches never knowing that God has anything to do with love and marriage. The ideas and ceremonies often take their shape and their values from the latest wedding on the afternoon soaps - marriage a la General Hospital or As the World Turns. We have forgotten that within the Catholic community marriage is a **sacrament**. As a sacrament, marriage is liturgy - **an act of worship of God**. What we would never accept as appropriate at Sunday worship suddenly becomes acceptable at a marriage.

All too often our choices, big and small, unwittingly sign and promote a secular view of marriage. We make the mistake of simply celebrating human love rather than seeing our marriage liturgy as a way to clearly sign and speak of the wonderful, life-giving mystery of God's love as reflected and experienced in the love of husband and wife. It is precisely this that makes a wedding in the church different from a wedding before a justice of the peace. A sacramental marriage celebrates the divine in

human love and "signifies the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church."

(Cf. Rite of Marriage, No.1)

What can we do to right this situation? The answer is not simple because it will require a change in attitudes on the part of both laity and clergy. Such a problem will not be solved overnight but we can begin with some simple steps:

1. Decide that within your parish **Marriage is liturgy**. Make the commitment to celebrate marriage as an act of worship of God and an opportunity to sacramentally sign the presence of God in human love.
2. Gather priests, deacons, musicians and your liturgy committee to evaluate current parish wedding practices in the light of the vision of marriage as "God-centered" sacramental worship, and the Catholic wedding ceremony found in the Rite of Marriage.

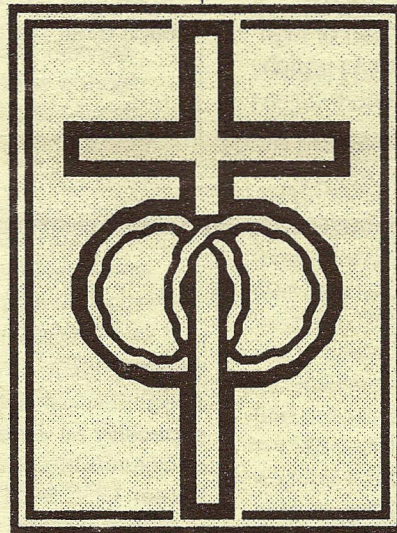
Look carefully at each element of the rite (entrance, readings, exchange of vows, etc) and see if it signs the sacred or the secular.

For example, the entrance rite should be recognizable as part of a Catholic worship service. Its purpose is to gather and unite the assembly for worship. As in all other sacramental worship, the liturgical ministers should be part of the entrance procession. This includes the priest, deacon, lector, special ministers of communion, servers and crucifer, the groom as well as the bride and their attendants. (See Rite of Marriage, No. 20)

3. After the evaluation is completed, determine a workable parish wedding policy statement that clergy, staff, musicians, and parishioners can understand and support.

This parish wedding policy statement can help the parish to see how it joins the bride and groom in celebrating their love and commitment to each other; and helps the couple to see how they join in the community's sacramental worship on the occasion of their marriage. Marriage is not a private affair belonging to the couple and their families. It is the worship of the Church — a celebration of the entire community expressing its faith in God and what his grace has brought about in the lives of the couple about to be married.

The statement can include valuable information about



setting the wedding date, choosing a ceremony or a nuptial mass, time scheduling, ministers for the celebration, liturgy preparation information, church decoration policies, photography and videotaping, rehearsal information, answers to questions about liturgical music, marriage banns, the use of the "unity candle" required paperwork, offerings for church and musician.

In addition there may be handouts which offer wedding entrance procession options, the location and functioning of photographers, seating arrangements for the wedding party, options for placement of floral arrangements, etc. (Cf. *Parish Weddings* by Austin Fleming, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1987, for sample policy statements and handouts. This is a wonderful tool to assist parishes in preparing their own parish wedding policy statements.)

4. Print the statement. (Eg. *Celebrating Marriage in St. Francis Xavier Parish*) Then distribute it widely as a valuable tool for sacramental catechesis of the whole community. It should be given to couples when they *first contact* the church to make wedding arrangements, and should be used as a Sunday bulletin insert, in pre-Cana sessions, as part of high school CCD classes, and in presentations to parish societies and organizations.

5. Help the couples to prepare for their wedding liturgy by providing them with an informed sacramental

catechesis so that they will understand the values behind the parish marriage policy statement. The discussion concerning the wedding liturgy should begin when the couple first contacts the parish. This gives the couple time to read and understand the policy, to ask questions, and to discuss the various options with each other and with the priest or parish wedding liturgy team.

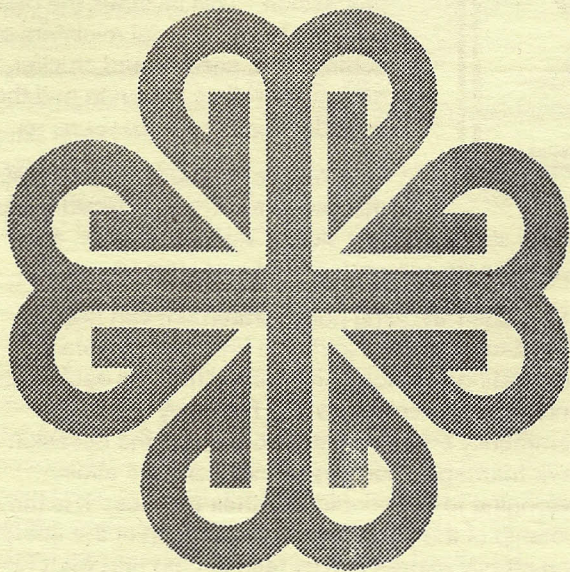
Almost all the arguments, problems and disagreements can be avoided by simply starting early and not waiting to the rehearsal to explain the parish policy and the values of good, prayerful liturgy.

Finally, weddings can be wonderful opportunities to deeply touch and positively influence young men and women at a very important point in their lives. It is an opportunity for sensitive pastoral ministry leading the couple to a new awareness of God's presence in themselves, the community and in their love for each other.

When parishes take weddings seriously as truly the worship of God, experience has shown that couples begin to understand and respond and are happy to know that when they speak their vows they say "I do" not only to each other but to the presence of God among us.*

Rev. Charles J. Miller
Director, Worship Office
Archdiocese of Newark

From the Editor:.....



With this issue of Word on Worship, we bring 1991 to a close. It is our hope that this issue will be of help to you, especially as we prepare to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' coming to the Americas. Our next issue, Winter 1992, will be dedicated to liturgical information related to the celebration of the Triduum.

I would like to mention that we will be raising our yearly subscription charge to \$10.00 per year. We have gone through all of our subscribers to insure that you are receiving the correct number of issues in light of past difficulties with Word on Worship. We are still having some difficulties, but we are still attempting to get ourselves back on track. We hope you understand. The increase in the fee is due to escalating costs which have touched every area of our nation's economy.

May the new year find you being refreshed in your particular ministry and may the Lord, who has begun the good work, bring it to its fulfillment in his kingdom.

Fr. Robert Laferrera
Editor

The FDLG Report

The annual national meeting of diocesan liturgical commissions and offices of worship was held in the diocese of Phoenix, AZ from October 11-14, 1991. More than 230 delegates, representing over 120 dioceses, attended the meeting, which was jointly sponsored by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and the NCCB Committee on the Liturgy. They were joined by over 350 local parish liturgical ministers.

The general theme of the meeting was "Ritual: The Language of Transformation." Major presentations were given by Dr. Megan McKenna, Nancy and Graziano Marcheschi, Reverend John Baldovin, SJ, and Reverend Richard Fragomeni.

The delegates voted on several position statements which had been formulated at regional meetings of the delegates during the spring of 1991. Four statements received the requisite level of support needed for action to be taken on them by the FDLG Board of Directors at its next meeting in January. The delegates recommended the preparation of a Rite of Renewal of Commitment to Priestly Service which could be celebrated independent of the annual Chrism Mass. They supported concerted effort by all diocesan commissions and offices of worship to assign high priority to "the work of promoting the Eucharist as the culmination of Christian initiation." They authorized the development of a resource to assist parishes in eliminating the widespread practice of distributing Holy Communion to the faithful at Mass with hosts consecrated at a previous Mass, a practice strongly discouraged by the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and other revised liturgical books. And they asked the bishops of the United States to address "the urgent need to provide for the complete range of sacramental ministry and weekly celebration of the Sunday Mass by actively seeking means to broaden access to ordained ministry." Finally, the delegates approved a resolution of immediate concern, drafted in the course of the national meeting, which expressed support for an action to be considered by the bishops of the United States in November, namely, that the solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord be transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter.

During the business session of the FDLG Board of Directors which was held on October 11, Sr. Anthony Poerio, IBVM, of Phoenix was elected chairperson for the coming two years. Also elected as officers of the Board of Directors were: Reverend James P. Moroney (Worcester), vice-chairperson; Reverend Richard Butler (Boston), treasurer; Mr. Peter Ghiloni (Milwaukee) and Reverend Daniel Vogelpohl (Covington), delegates-at-large.*

What's Rite

Q. My fiance and I attended a friend's wedding and liked the music selections. But our priest told us that the song we want for the procession into church isn't appropriate for a wedding Mass because it's a popular song. We're very upset about this. After all, our friends are Catholic and they had it at their wedding. And besides, shouldn't we be able to choose the music that's meaningful to us since it's our day?

A. Can you image walking into your wedding reception while the band plays "Now Thank We All Our God?" If that seems silly to you, then you can understand why it's equally inappropriate to play or sing popular songs -- which are perfectly fine for the reception -- during a church service of any kind. Even if you've seen it done somewhere else, it's simply not a good practice.

Our churches are sacred places and everything we do in them -- readings, music, decorations -- should reflect in a genuine way that sacredness. Your wedding, too, is a sacred rite and deserves the same dignity.

Finally, your wedding day is not just "your day." It's far bigger than that! It's the Church's day, too. The same Christian community that initiated you into Christ now stands ready to witness your marriage vows and to support you in the tremendous challenge of Christian marriage. Your wedding day is really a much larger event than simply the joining of two lives -- however romantic that may seem -- and so it is part of the Church's common worship. For that reason, the Christian community sets some guidelines for the sort of music that is suitable for the marriage of baptized Christians. We suggest that you find out what music is recommended for weddings (there's a wide variety of possibilities) and, together with the priest and the music minister, work out some suitable selections.*

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Word on Worship

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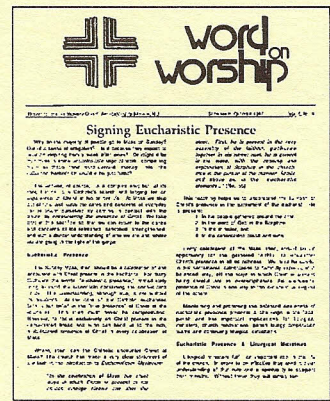
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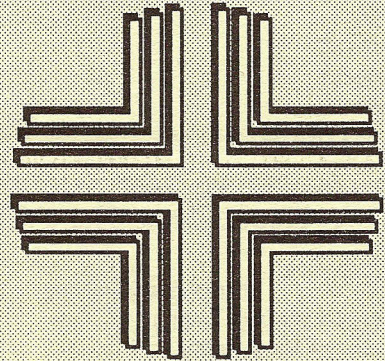
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