

# LITURGY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 No. 2

February 2001

A Quarterly Newsletter prepared by the Institute of Liturgy and Mission, Sarum College for the Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

**THE EDITOR WRITES:** Lent is once more upon us, and we are reminded again that its primary purpose is preparation for the Easter sacraments – catechumens through the rites of Christian Initiation, the rest of us through recalling our own Baptism and by penance (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 109; *General Norms for Liturgical Year and Calendar* 27). There seems no better time for us to reexamine our baptismal practice. This Newsletter will touch upon three aspects of it: the sequence of the sacraments (below), Baptism during Mass (p.3), and the priority of immersion.

Over the last thirty years, our understanding of the Eucharist has been transformed as much as anything by what we have regularly experienced: processing with the gifts, more breadlike hosts, a more genuine breaking and sharing of them, reception from the altar rather than the tabernacle, drinking from the cup. Symbols, and the way they are used, teach far more powerfully than any homilies, catechisms or instructions.

The same is true, of course, of all sacramental worship, but we experience the other sacraments less frequently and much less effort has so far been made to recover the full authenticity of their symbols. Just as food and drink, breaking and sharing, eating and drinking should speak for themselves, so also water and oil, plunging and pouring, touching and massaging should not need to be explained. It is in experiencing them in their natural integrity and consistency that their spiritual significance and power is appropriated.

We say that Baptism is a dying and rising, a burial, a rebirth, but nothing in our timid and parsimonious actions actually signifies those mighty truths. Less ambitiously, we say that it's a bath, but what we do would scarcely suggest a serious wash. We have domesticated the sacraments. Of its nature, Baptism is meant to be elemental, traumatic, and very wet.

Chris Walsh

## Initiation of Children

In Australia over the last two decades there has been a substantial shift away from the near-universal, but for all that thoroughly untraditional, sequence of infant Baptism – first Communion – Confirmation to the more coherent and traditional sequence of Baptism – Confirmation – first Communion (which respects the Eucharist as the goal and climax of Initiation, and was always maintained in canon law, the catechism, the texts of the liturgy and the documents of the magisterium).

Many dioceses in the United States and France have also made this shift, and now the Cana-

dian Bishops' Conference is promoting the move. Scottish bishops have made a similar policy decision, and several dioceses there are embarked on the change-over. We anticipate a growing debate in this country. A useful airing of the issues, theological, liturgical and pastoral, can be found in the Summer 2000 number of **National Bulletin on Liturgy** (Canadian Bishops' Conference), and in backnumbers of **Catechumenate** (Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago) and **Liturgy News** (Brisbane, Australia).

*Here a people of  
godly race are  
born for heaven;  
the Spirit gives them life  
in the fertile waters. The  
Church-Mother in these  
waves bears her children  
like virginal fruit she has  
conceived by the Holy  
Spirit.*

*Baptistry of St John Lateran, Rome,  
5th century*

*Baptism into Christ  
demands enough water  
to die in, oil so fragrant  
and in such quantity  
that it becomes the  
Easter aroma, bread and  
wine enough to feed  
and rejoice hearts. And  
rooms of glory filled  
with life rather than  
crumpled vestments and  
stacks of folding chairs.*

*Aidan Kavanagh,  
The Shape of Baptism 1978*

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## Coming Events

The **National Liturgical Seminar** will take place from 5-7 June 2001 at Hinsley Hall Leeds. The subject will be *Liturgy as Spirituality*. For booking and further information, contact the Liturgy Office.

Following the conference in May of the **European Catechumenate Network**, which it is hosting jointly with the Anglicans, the **RCIA Network** will be holding its own annual conference at Hinsley Hall, Leeds, from 5-7 September 2001. This year's topic will be *Sponsorship in the Church*.

Fr John Melloh, professor of liturgical homiletics at the University of Notre Dame, will be leading a three-day seminar on **The Art of Liturgical Preaching**, organised by Praxis, at Sarum College 22-24 May 2001. Early booking is advised

## Further Information

**US Bishops' Conference**  
[www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/](http://www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/)

**Canadian Bishops' Conference**  
[www.cccb.ca/](http://www.cccb.ca/)

**Liturgical Press:**  
[www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)  
Distribution in UK –  
Columba Books:  
00 353 1 294 2556  
[www.columba.ie](http://www.columba.ie)

**Liturgy Training Publications (LTP):**  
[www.ltp.org](http://www.ltp.org)  
Distribution in UK –  
McCrimmons:  
01702 218 956  
[www.McCrimmons.co.uk](http://www.McCrimmons.co.uk)

Back issues of *Liturgy* can be obtained from the Liturgy Office

## Bishops' Conference

At its November meeting, the Conference elected Archbishop Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Westminster as president and Archbishop Patrick Kelly of Liverpool as vice-president. In the Department for Christian Life and Worship, new member Bishop Mark Jabalé OSB, coadjutor of Menevia, has succeeded to the chair left vacant by the death of Bishop John Brewer. Bishop Brian Noble of Shrewsbury has succeeded Bishop Thomas McMahon of Brentwood as the Conference's representative on the board of ICEL, with Bishop Jabalé as his substitute.

The Conference approved the revised *Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons* (a new English translation of the Latin second edition), and English translations of the prayer texts for the new patrons of Europe, SS Bridget of Sweden and Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein). These will now be sent to Rome for the 'recognitio' of the Holy See.

The bishops of the Department for Christian Life and Worship decided to seek a personal meeting with the officers of the Congregation for Divine Worship on the impasse over the *Order of Christian Marriage* (see last issue). It is hoped this will take place at the end of March.

## Tried and Tested

### Taking the Plunge

The word 'baptize' comes from the Greek 'to plunge or immerse', and the Church's traditional preference has been for some form of immersion: standing or kneeling or being dipped in water, while water is poured over the head or the head is ducked. The emergence of the new Christian from the enveloping waters expresses most vividly

- new creation and rebirth through the breaking of waters and emergence from the womb;
- redemption and liberation by passing through the waters of death and destruction and emerging into new life in the land of promise;
- participation in the death, burial

and resurrection of the Lord. They also gave approval to the *Liturgy Review Process* ('audit') which has been successfully piloted in a number of parishes in the two countries. Work has begun on a pack of supplementary materials to accompany the instrument when it is made available to dioceses later in the year. Watch this space for further information.

### Roman Missal

The imminent appearance of the third edition of the Latin *Missale Romanum* reported in our last issue, has been postponed yet again. Easter 2001 is now suggested as the likely date, a full twelve months after it was officially promulgated. Meanwhile, the revised and expanded General Instruction which accompanies it (see last issue) has now been translated by ICEL and should be released to Bishops' Conferences in the next couple of months.

Numerous errors were found in the Latin text and have been forwarded to the Congregation, and some Bishops' Conferences are seeking clarification of some of its provisions and amendment of, or derogation from, several others.

No word has been received on the revised English language text of the *Roman Missal: Sacramentary*, approved by the Bishops' Conferences of the English-speaking

and resurrection of the Lord.

Immersion is presumed as the first option in the rubrics of both adult and infant Baptism.

Two excellent videos by LTP Chicago show how it can be done in an ordinary parish: **This is the Night**: a Parish Welcomes New Members (VHS 30 mins.), and **New Life**: a Parish Celebrates Infant Baptism (VHS 30 mins.).

Another video, from Liturgical Press Collegeville, **Re-examining Baptismal Fonts**: Baptismal Space for the Contemporary Church (VHS 36 mins), shows how fonts have been, and can be, constructed and adapted for immersion of both adults and infants, as does the excellently illustrated book by Regina Kuehn, **A Place for Baptism** (LTP, Chicago, 1992).

world in 1998.

## Southern Dioceses

Following the long-standing precedent set by their northern colleagues, representatives of the liturgy commissions of dioceses in the rest of the country had a first meeting in Birmingham, 22 November. They agreed to meet twice yearly, rotating between Birmingham, Bristol and London, and elected Paul Inwood of Portsmouth diocese as convenor and secretary.

## Art and Architecture

The directory of the US Bishops' Conference, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* (1978, 1986), has been hugely influential and not just in America. At their November meeting, the US bishops approved a new directory which builds upon and replaces it, entitled *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*. Publication details are not yet to hand. In 1999, the Canadian Bishops' Conference issued a new directory for that country: *Our Place of Worship*. We will return to both publications in a future issue. Meanwhile, the Committee for Art, Architecture and Heritage of our own Bishops' Conference is completing a directory on the reordering of churches, which will shortly be going to the Conference for approval. (see p.4).

If you are sceptical how practical this would be in our circumstances, Fr Kevin McGinnell reports how his Milton Keynes parish implemented it in an article: **A Case for Immersion in Liturgy**, August 1999. And if you cannot contemplate any structural alterations, but would like to test the possibilities, splendid interim facilities can be bought or hired from **Birthworks**, Unit 9, Fiddlebridge Lane, Hatfield, Herts. AL10 0SP tel. 01707 880333, and **J.W.Green Swimming Pools Ltd**, Regency House, 88a Great Brick Kiln St, Graisleigh, Wolverhampton WV3 0PU, tel. 01902 427709. Each is well experienced in installing facilities in Catholic churches. Failing that, you could always take a look around your local garden centre!

## Baptism during Mass

One of the more popular innovations of the liturgical reform has been the celebration of baptisms during Sunday parish Mass. The *Rite of Baptism for Children* strongly recommends that baptisms should take place on Sunday, the day of the Paschal Mystery, at a communal celebration for several children, in the presence of the faithful who participate actively, and with music, servers, processions and all the elements of a genuine celebration. What more obvious way to achieve this than to incorporate Baptism into the parish Mass? And indeed the rite does expressly permit this “so that the entire community may be present and the relation between Baptism and the Eucharist may be clearly seen”.

So, ideally, instead of a small group of family and friends huddling sheepishly in

an empty and perhaps alien building for a quasi-private transaction conducted in virtual monologue, they are welcomed, in a warm and festive building, into a gathering of the parish community, served by a variety of ministers, ready to share its faith with them, support them in their commitment, and express it all joyfully in dialogue and song.

But the rite also says “this should not be done too often”. Why this reservation?

First, from the point of view of the Sunday assembly : it is unhelpful if Sunday Mass is unduly prolonged on a frequent basis, if the pattern of Sunday readings, and especially homilies, is regularly distorted, if the same congregation is repeatedly — or without warning — required to participate.

Secondly, from the point of view of the children and

their families: the relationship between Baptism and the Eucharist may not in fact be made terribly clear, but be somewhat problematic. When other sacraments are celebrated during Mass, the ‘recipients’ express and experience the link by proceeding to Holy Communion. In this instance, however, the children are not permitted to be communicated (as they are in the Eastern churches) and so very often in England and Wales it may not even be possible or appropriate for the parents and family to receive either, and the arrangement simply puts them under pressure either to approach frivolously or in bad faith, or else be under a spotlight in publicly abstaining.

### Reading the Reviews

#### Coming to God through the Arts

The December 2000 issue of *Priests and People* was devoted to this theme. Among several interesting articles on icons, poetry, and the arts, all relevant to liturgy, two were particularly worth reading: Stephen Dean’s **Does Music Reveal God?** and Ian Coleman’s **The Priesthood of the Organist**. Especially not to be missed is the spirited response by the redoubtable Mgr J.D.Crichton to an earlier article by Eamon Duffy which appeared to blame liturgists and the revised liturgy itself for the decline of popular devotions.

### Beg, borrow... or buy

The summit of the Church’s year is the Easter Triduum, the climax of the Triduum is the Easter Vigil, and the heart of the Vigil is the sacraments of Initiation. To help us re-examine our practice and to spur us on to better preparation, more imaginative and resourceful celebration – and perhaps even a dash of élan – the best single book to get hold of is undoubtedly Gabe Huck, **The Three Days: Parish Prayer in the Paschal Triduum** (LTP 1981, 1992). Also useful is **The Triduum Book** by the editors of *Modern Liturgy* (San Jose CA, Resource Publications 1997) and J.A.Wilde (ed.), **Commentaries on the RCIA** (LTP 1988), especially

the chapters by R.Kemp “*Celebrating the Solemn Vigil*”, R.Fragomeni “*Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil*”, and D.Power “*Blessing of the Baptismal Water*”. From this country, J.D.Crichton, **The Lord is Risen**: the Liturgy from Paschiontide to Pentecost (Kevin Mayhew 1992) provides, as always, a sound general overview. McCrimmon’s highly serviceable collection of musical resources, **Music for Holy Week and Easter**, is being reprinted in a new edition, and Stephen Dean has published **Resurrexit** — Music for Lent, the Easter Triduum and Eastertide (Decani 2001), as a companion volume to *Laudate*.

The 11th century baptismal font at St Ulrich in the Black Forest has a diameter of 2.6 metres (8.5 feet), accommodating as many as twenty infants at a time for immersion.

“In a joyous rite of summer, the United House of Prayer for All People baptized hundreds of people with a fire hose yesterday on 115th Street near Fifth Avenue. ‘I ask the Lord to bless the water of the New York reservoir’ Bishop S.C.Madison prayed as the ceremony began.”

New York Times, 7 August 2000

Hymn-singing can be bad for your health according to a report on the spread of TB in the Midlands. An outbreak of the infection among a family group was found to have struck other members of a church attended by one of the original cases. Experts suggested that long church services, poor ventilation, and droplets spread by enthusiastic singing could be to blame.

Sunday Times, 15 October 2000

### Further Information

**Priests and People:**  
www.thetablet.co.uk  
020 8748 8484

**Liturgy Training Publications**  
see page 2

**Resource Publications**  
www.rpinet.com/index.html  
*Distribution in UK* –  
Columba Books:  
00 353 1 294 2556  
www.columba.ie

**Kevin Mayhew**  
http://www.kevinmayhew.co.uk  
01449 737978

**McCrimmons**  
see page 2

**Decani Music**  
www.decanimusic.co.uk  
01638 716 579

*Reception of Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion and Matrimony has been turned into an obstacle course the laity must survive rather than an experience of grace. Many of them come away from the experience not transformed by an encounter with grace, but bitterly angry with the Church.*

Andrew Greeley,  
America 2000

*It is slowly, too slowly, becoming apparent that it is not uniformity, organisation and law that hold the Church together, but a common faith and a shared love.*

J.D.Crichton,  
Once and Future Liturgy 1977

## The Baptistry

As reported above, the Art, Architecture and Heritage Committee of the Bishops' Conference Department for Christian Life and Worship has been working on a new directory for the reordering of parish churches. A draft will be presented to the bishops this year. While stressing that this draft document has no authority as yet, with the agreement of the committee we reproduce here, as practical information, some relevant extracts from chapter 9 on the Baptistry:

9.3 All provision for baptism, however, should take into account first of all the statement in the document Christian Initiation, General Introduction; *The baptistry or the area where the baptismal font is located should be reserved for the sacrament of baptism and should be worthy to serve as the place whom Christians are reborn in water and the Holy Spirit.* (CIGI no.25).

This means that, even in the smallest churches, the place where baptisms take place should be quite distinct from other areas in the church. A separate, well-cared for and beautifully adorned baptistry with a font which through its design declares that all are welcome to the fountain of life, manifests the importance the church attaches to baptism in a way that a portable font or bowl of water on the corner of a sanctuary can never approach.

9.4 The need for reordering the existing area for baptism may arise from a number of situations:

- An existing baptistry in an older church is too small or insufficiently visible to accommodate the numbers of people envisaged by the rite;
- A previous re-ordering has placed the font on the sanctuary, which does not allow for the need for a separate space for the separate sacrament of baptism and leads to the sanctuary becoming a 'stage' on which the clergy perform, watched by a passive 'audience';
- A previous re-ordering has left the church with a temporary font, either left permanently in its own space or moved in and out of the church as occasion demands;
- A development in the community's understanding of baptism, caused by the experience of the RCIA.

9.7 The revised rites of initiation place a greater emphasis on the entrance into the community of faith, the Church. Thus, while a baptism should be an occasion of great joy for the immediate family, it is just as much a celebration of the local church (RCIA 4, 9-9.5). It is presumed that representatives of the community or even full assemblies of the local church will be present, and that more than one baptism will be taking place at a single celebration.

## Practicalities

9.8 A suitable space should be set aside for the baptismal party and at least some members of the church community to gather at the beginning of the rite. This may be at the church door, in a narthex developed for gathering rites, or in a space near the entrance of the church.

9.9 The space around the baptismal font should be large enough for a number of people to gather, although it may not be spacious enough for the whole community. Consideration should be given to housing the font in a space close to the entrance of the church, although no place within the church is excluded from consideration (except the sanctuary and the place where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved).

9.10 The baptistry need not be a separate, enclosed place, but should be a recognisable space within the body of the church, set apart for the celebration of baptism. It may be differentiated by the use of colour, artwork, design or decoration of floor, windows or walls.

9.11 Consideration should be given to appropriate seating arrangements during the rite, for example for the whole assembly during the Liturgy of the Word, and for the elderly or infirm at other times during the celebration.

9.12 In the rites preference is given to baptism by immersion (that is, standing in water while water is poured over the head and whole body) rather than by infusion (that is, leaning over a font or bowl as water is poured over the head). New fonts should be designed to enable both methods to take place.

9.13 The baptismal font is the focal point for the sacrament; it is the container for the 'pure and clean' water used in baptism. It should be 'spotlessly clean and of pleasing design' (CIGI no.18). It stands as a reminder of our baptismal vocation. It should be designed in such a way as to make baptism by immersion possible for both adults and children, by right- and left-handed persons. This means that the bowl of the font needs to be quite large in size. Where the immersion of adults is to be undertaken a sunken pool or raised cistern will need to be incorporated.

9.17 For baptismal pools consideration will need to be given to how people will enter and leave the water safely, and to whether the presiding priest will stand inside or outside the pool or cistern. In addition, how disabled people will baptise or be baptised, with any assistance necessary, should be considered.

*If you wish to comment on this extract please write to the Liturgy Office.*

### Liturgy Newsletter

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newsletter

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