

LITURGY NEWSLETTER

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A Quarterly Newsletter prepared for the Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

The Editor writes: Few things have changed so comprehensively and so rapidly in the last decades of the 20th century as the British way of death. Catholics have succumbed to many of the same social trends and influences as everyone else.

Fifteen years ago ICEL prepared the *Order of Christian Funerals*, a massively enriched revision of the 1970 funeral rite for English-speaking countries, and the Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales and Scotland adapted it further to meet the particular needs of these countries. Confirmed by the Holy See in 1988, it was offered as a resource to help Catholics, bereaved families and parish communities alike, to reclaim death and dying from the worst secular trends, to honour the bodies of the dead, and to celebrate the Christian's last journey with paschal faith. It would be idle to pretend that OCF was universally implemented, or even tried, and all the while social trends and unwelcome development have been accelerating almost without our noticing

This November issue of the Newsletter identifies some trends, raises questions about our response to them, and draws attention to some of the many excellent practical resources now available to strengthen and enrich our crucial ministry to the dying, the dead, and the bereaved.

Chris Walsh

At Rest in the Lord

2 September, **Mgr James Dunlop Crichton**, aged 94, pastor emeritus of Pershore, doyen and patriarch of English Catholic liturgists. Born in 1907, half way through the liturgical reforms of Pius X, his life spanned virtually an entire century of liturgical renewal, and no one in this country contributed more to its promotion and implementation.

An early member of the Society of St Gregory and contributor to *The Sower*, from the thirties he was championing a liturgy that was celebrated to the highest standards but was wholly accessible to the people. In close touch with developments in thinking and practice in Europe, he was one of the very few English participants at the breakthrough Assisi congress in 1956.

A prophet without honour in the complacent years before Vatican II, he was splendidly vindicated by its enactments and was ready and well placed to issue that steady stream of commentaries on the liturgy constitution and the

revised rites as they appeared, which have served for nearly forty years as standard tools of liturgical formation not only in England and Wales and not only for Roman Catholics.

From 1952 to 1972 he edited for the Society of St Gregory the country's longest running liturgy periodical, *Liturgy* later *Life and Worship*, and gave generous assistance and encouragement to the younger generation of liturgists which emerged in the aftermath of the Council.

He seems never to have been a 'committee-man' or to have served on liturgical commissions. However, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales was able to commission important work from him, most notably the collects of the *Divine Office* which he translated along with Professor Harold Finberg and Dom Placid Murray, and a fine draft eucharistic prayer for the National Pastoral Congress 1980, which sadly was never proceeded with.

Though long revered by his peers and his

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I grew to appreciate his central convictions about the quality of liturgy that should be found in our parishes. I share them. He wanted liturgies which were thoughtfully planned and graciously carried out. Spontaneity at the altar has little part; principled creativity certainly does. The Mass must be celebrated prayerfully and with reverence, with everything aimed at aiding and enhancing the prayer of the people in the worship of God.

Archbishop V. Nichols
at J.D.Crichton's funeral

The key to Mgr Crichton's endeavours was his firm and clear perception that the Church draws all its force from the celebration of the liturgy and is ordered in every aspect of its activity to the celebration of the liturgy, which is a foretaste of heavenly life before the throne of God.

Cardinal Medina Estevez,
message at J.D.Crichton's funeral

God,
O listen favourably to our prayers offered on behalf of your servant and priest, and grant that James, who committed himself zealously to the service of your name, may rejoice for ever in the company of the saints. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Order of Christian Funerals

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Coming Events

A **National Catholic Choirs Festival** will be held in the chapel of St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, on Saturday 24 November from 10.30am to 5.00pm. For further details, contact Stephen Dean on 01638 711019.

The Society of St Gregory will be celebrating a **Memorial Mass** for Mgr J.D. Crichton at St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, also on Saturday 24 November, at 11.30am.

Further Information

Martyrology
will presumably be published by
Libreria Editrice Vaticana
www.ixtmedia.com

Liturgy Office
020 7901 4850

Chapmans
www.contium-books.com

Decani
01638 716579
www.decanimusic.co.uk

disciples, official recognition came very late in life indeed, with the title of Monsignor in 1980 and, at last, an honorary doctorate from the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome in 1995. A warm eulogy from the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship was read at his funeral on 11 September.

Congregation for Divine Worship

In the last week of September a plenary meeting of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments (CDW) was held in Rome, attended by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Westminster and Bishop Terence Brain of Salford. It is understood the theme was popular devotion and the liturgy.

Roman Martyrology

On 2 October the long-heralded new edition of the Roman Martyrology was released by the CDW in Rome. The martyrology is the register of saints and blessed officially recognised by the Holy See. This edition, replacing that of 1956, contains some 6500 entries, no less than 1717 of them beatified or canonised by the present pope. Each is assigned to a day in the year, with their place of death, status and particular charism briefly recorded.

Work can now resume on the preparation of English and Welsh martyrologies which will contain all the saints and blessed venerated in the dioceses of these countries, and assemble texts for their celebration into a serviceable volume.

Bishops' Conference

In the reorganisation of the structures and personnel of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales the new

Department of Christian Life and Worship now consists of three committees: Liturgy, chaired by Bishop Arthur Roche, auxiliary in Westminster; Spirituality, chaired by Bishop Brian Noble of Shrewsbury; Heritage, chaired by Bishop Thomas McMahon of Brentwood. Chairman of the Department is Bishop Mark Jabalé OSB of Menevia. In future Bishop Roche will represent the Conference on the episcopal board of ICEL.

On 4 September Bishop Jabalé issued the following clarification regarding an item in the August issue of this newsletter:

"The *Liturgy Newsletter* is not an official publication of the Bishops' Conference. The views expressed in the August 2001 issue concerning the recent instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam* are Canon Christopher Walsh's own and do not represent the position of the Bishops' Conference. All new translations of the liturgy will be approved by Rome, just as those presently in use in England and Wales have been approved by Rome."

Morning & Evening Prayer

Fascicles 1 (Advent) and 2 (Christmas) of *From the Rising of the Sun to its Setting*, the supplementary resource prepared for the Department of Christian Life and Worship, are now available from the Liturgy Office.

Tried and Tested

Two important books recently issued by the Bishops' Conference (see pg. 4):

In Sure and Certain Hope (Chapman 1999), a compact hard-backed volume containing rites and other prayer resources drawn from *Pastoral Care of the Sick* and *Order of Christian Funerals*, adapted and presented for use by lay leaders in their growing ministry to the dying, the dead and the bereaved.

Into Your Hands (Decani 1999), a larger format paper-back resource intended for a wider public — bereaved families and those who minister to them — as a very practical help in organising the funeral and planning the liturgy. It contains the texts of all the possible readings, a wide selection of the prayers of the rite, an extensive list of hymns, and practical check-lists, so that families (or even the dying themselves) can select from the riches available the options most appropriate to their needs. Also a list of useful addresses. Parishes really should have stocks of these, regularly replenished.

Three leaflets available from the Liturgy Office:

Guidelines for Roman Catholic Funerals, an 8 page leaflet presenting in clear and easy form the principles and requirements of the revised Order of Christian Funerals. Ideal for your local undertaker and anyone (clergy not excluded?) who has never understood the revised rite.

Catholic Funerals: a Guide, a very simple A4 flyer giving practical advice on "what to do when someone dies", the broad options and features of a Catholic funeral, and answers to some regularly encountered questions. This can be freely reproduced, and would be good to have in bulk at the back of every church.

Music at Funerals, a 12 page guide for parish musicians, identifying choices, priorities, ministries and planning requirements for the whole range of funeral liturgies.

Cremation

Would there have been any difference to people's reaction if Princess Diana or Mother Teresa had been cremated rather than buried? What if their respective gun-carriages had carried only an urn with ashes? Why were they not cremated? Is there one law for the rich and famous and another for the rest?

I am not against cremation *per se*. We have few statistics, but some would suggest that less than 20% of Catholics would choose cremation, though this would vary regionally. My own experience would indicate far fewer again among churchgoing Catholics. Some of this would be due to our recent history of not permitting cremation until the 1960s. More would be due to a deep-seated cultural understanding of burial among particularly Irish and Italian Catholics.

The body is essential for the personality to be expressed. There can be a sense that to cremate is to destroy, rather than accept the processes of nature. Society needs to be faced with the reality of death, rather than be duped by a certain sanitisation of mortality that seems to have overtaken us. Death is a Christian concept that needs to be proclaimed so that resurrection can be asserted.

Burial has a finality as people throw earth, flowers, holy water onto a coffin. The soil will cover the person soon, and it is indeed earth to earth, dust to dust. The one formed from the earth by the breath of God as Genesis describes, returns.

Cremation means the closing of curtains, or a moving conveyor belt, or a descending platform, to what everyone knows is a queue for disposal. We do not commit in such an active way as in a burial and we do not lay the dead in a tomb as Christians. Cremation also means that the body is not there to be honoured. The most that can be visited is the small plaque covering interred ashes, or the name in the book of remembrance. It is not just about honouring the body before burial but all those acts and rituals that are to do with visiting cemeteries and graves. The mourner continues that visiting long after scattered ashes have become only a memory. It becomes a way of focussing prayer for the dead. It may be that death has become so distant, and cremation is so much part of this process, that we, as a society, need graves to face up to the deeper reality of life and death. Christian graves then become places of proclamation. This begs questions about

the nature of memorials – that they be truly Christian, that their language be of faith.

I do not say that cremation has no place, but ask whether we are being forced into it as the only means of disposal for the created body of the image of God because of practical pressures from society. A utilitarianism is making demands when we are talking about the individual Christian, *imago Dei*, temple of the Spirit, buried and raised with Christ in baptism. This faith of ours is so rooted in the burial and resurrection of Christ that we need never to lose sight of the symbolic power of Christian burial. We have returned only recently to the powerful symbol of total immersion at baptism, and how that has moved people's thinking. If we move away further from burial, the Christian community could lose a very fundamental symbol in a world where the power of symbol is ever more challenged, and where burial is a symbol that speaks for itself.

Kevin McGinnell
(to Churches' Funeral Group,
abridged)

Observed yet again : a redundant (but why?) octagonal stone baptismal font redeployed in a presbytery garden as a birdbath. Would we countenance recycling a tabernacle as a drinks cabinet?

Bundesliga highflyers Schalke 04 of Gelsenkirchen have built into their new state-of-the-art 65,000 seat stadium a fully fitted chapel where fans will be able to celebrate weddings, christenings and other services (as well as victories).

Following the long-established provision for civil marriages, the French government is to introduce another town hall ceremony in which parents can solemnly mark the birth of a child and publicly commit themselves to its upbringing. With 40% of births occurring out of wedlock, it is hoped the public ceremony will encourage a commitment to stable, shared parenting.

Further Information

Churches' Group on Funeral Services at Cemeteries and Crematoria coordinates the policy of the Churches in this area and relations with other organisations concerned with funerals.

Worship Magazine & Liturgical Press
www.litpress.org
Distribution in UK—
Columba Books
00 3531 294 2556
www.columba.ie

Cassell
www.continuum-books.com

Hodder
www.madaboutbooks.com

McCrimmons
01702 218 956
www.McCrimmons.co.uk

Liturgy Training Publications (LTP)
www.ltp.org
Distribution in UK—
McCrimmons
see above

Dominican Publications
www.dominicans.ie/dompubs/
Distributed by
Columba Books
see above

Reading the Reviews

This year marks the 75th birthday of **Worship**, the bi-monthly journal published by the Benedictines of Collegeville USA, which has been the most important journal for liturgical renewal in the English language in the 20th century. Founded by Virgil Michel in 1926, its subsequent editors were Godfrey Diekmann (1938–1967), Aelred Tegels and Michael Marx (1967–1987), and now Kevin Seasoltz. *Ad multos annos!*

Beg, borrow... or buy

Social trends and attitudes, and differing theological, pastoral and liturgical responses to them, are dealt with by a wide variety of local authors in **Interpreting Death** edited by Peter Jupp and Tony Rogers (Cassell 1997). Social, cultural and commercial developments are treated engagingly in the highly readable Tony Walter, **Funerals and How to Improve Them** (Hodder 1990).

For good pastoral guidance on implementing OCF in our parishes, see the little collection **The Parish Funeral**, edited by Stephen Dean (McCrimmons 1991), and the more recent

Margaret Smith, **Facing Death Together: Parish Funerals** (Liturgy Training Publications 1998) — an Australian pastoral liturgist and an American publisher, but with much good material to inform and inspire.

For anyone interested in recent church architecture, an ideal Christmas present might be Richard Hurley, **Irish Church Architecture in the Era of Vatican II** (Dominican Publications 2001).

Death, Funerals and Society

If we are to think about a new strategy, it is essential that the prayer life of the church, the liturgy, be developed in a way that reveals the gift of God in word and sacrament, so that it comes alive in all its power...

Do we celebrate the liturgy and especially the Holy Eucharist, the Mass, with the reverence and faith that is at the heart of what we profess to believe?

Liturgies must be celebrations that allow people, baptized in the Spirit of God, to rejoice in their faith and go out strengthened and emboldened to profess it.

Cardinal C. Murphy-O'Connor
to National Conference of Priests
September 2001

In 1999, the Bishops' Conference welcomed this statement from its Department of Christian Life and Worship and commended it to the Church.

When the Second Vatican Council mandated the reform of the funeral liturgy, the council fathers said that it "should express more clearly the paschal character of Christian death and should correspond more closely to the circumstances and traditions of various regions" (SC 81). Over recent years we have seen an increasing conflict between the two parts of this vision for a variety of reasons:

- Secular trends are beginning to overshadow the long-standing use of traditional Christian symbols, gestures and rites; increasingly people take for granted that whatever they want at a Catholic funeral must be all right, e.g. the use of any popular music whatever.
- People's familiarity with the Catholic funeral tradition is decreasing with each passing generation, even among practising members of the Church.
- We are living in a society where death has increasingly been sanitised and distanced from the family home.
- The closure of local cemeteries and the relative cost of burial is understandably favouring a choice for cremation, especially in many urban areas.
- We understand that very many ashes remain unclaimed and are disposed of by the crematorium authorities without any religious rites.
- Prepaid funeral plans which have come to the fore in recent times do not always reflect adequately the pastoral expectations of the Christian community, e.g. bringing the body to church the night before a funeral, or even at all.
- In the minds of very many people the key person in the funeral is now the funeral director more than the priest or the local church community.
- The Church and its ministers risk being marginalised by others taking over their responsibilities; this is more likely when people are lapsed.
- In our world where social change occurs so rapidly, our liturgical and pastoral practice can be affected detrimentally almost before we are aware of it.

In the face of these trends the Church must

continue to bear faithful witness, proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and our sharing in his paschal mystery. It is from the paschal mystery that the Church's authentic pastoral care and ministry of consolation flows. To respond to this challenge the Department recommends and encourages the following:

- Ongoing catechesis, at all levels, of the meaning of Christian death and resurrection, and a clear appreciation of the riches of the Catholic funeral tradition: the priority of the Word of God, the importance of preaching Christ's resurrection, the wealth of prayers and rites available, the power of Christian symbols and music.
- Holding of a vigil of prayer before the funeral, which may be in the family home, the chapel of rest or the church and does not require the presence of the body.
- Celebrating the funeral liturgy in the parish church rather than in a cemetery chapel or crematorium, to enable the local community of faith to express its prayerful and pastoral support.
- Interring ashes, using the rite provided, to ensure continued respect for the remains of a deceased Christian.
- Providing in church grounds a 'columbarium' or space for burial to facilitate the Christian interment of ashes.

In an increasing number of our parishes lay people minister to the sick and the dying, support the bereaved and help people to plan and to celebrate funerals. The Department recognises that our lay people need support and resources in this valuable ministry. Accordingly, we have prepared for publication *In Sure and Certain Hope: Rites and Prayers for the Use of Lay Leaders* which we believe will provide a rich resource book to encourage the ministry of lay people around the time of death and to assist those who lead parts of the funeral liturgy. The book includes 'Prayers after Death', 'Vigil for the Deceased' and 'The Interment of Ashes'. To help people prepare and celebrate a funeral we have also prepared for publication *Into Your Hands: Planning a Catholic Funeral, Readings and Prayers*. This booklet contains the funeral readings from Volume III of the Lectionary and the various prayer texts from the funeral rites, together with helpful notes on how to plan a worthy celebration of the Catholic funeral liturgy.

Liturgy Newsletter

www.liturgy.demon.co.uk/newsletter

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