

CUSTOMARY PRACTICES
OF
THE SYMBOLIC LIFE OF THE ORDER

September 4, 1969

SYMBOLIC LIFE

It would be difficult, in fact, nearly impossible, to overemphasize the importance of the symbolic life within the Life of the Order.

For it is the symbolic life that enables a high degree of selfconsciousness in any group by holding them before the Word and Final Reality that they have chosen as their own.

The particular symbolic life of the Order of the Ecumenical Institute has been forged from the tradition of the historical church and the tradition of the communities from which the Order emerged. It is a dynamic force in the life of the community always open to change, yet changing only with most careful consideration.

The participation in the symbolic life is, at the same time, both highly individual and highly -- corporate. It is only by individual decision to be a Man of Faith that one participates in the corporate activity. And the individual realizes that that decision presupposes a community of Christian brothers with whom he celebrates his decision. This would be true even in the case where the individual were physically isolated from others...he still would presuppose his community, historical and contemporary, as he celebrated on behalf of all being the symbolic rites of his faith.

The Man of Faith, then, is the man who realizes whatever his works may be, they are not Good works unless they issue forth from a stance of faith. For this man the participation in symbolic life is prior to all other activity whether he be alone or with fellow Christians.

THE COMMON MEAL OF THE ORDER

"The day of the Lord's Supper is an occasion of joy for the Christian community. Reconciled in their hearts with God and the brethren, the congregation receives the gift of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and, receiving that, it receives forgiveness, new life, and salvation. It is given new fellowship with God and men. 'The fellowship of the Lord's Supper is the superlative fulfillment of Christian fellowship. As the members of the congregation are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord so will they be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and his community is complete. The life of Christians together under the Word has reached its perfection in the sacrament."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

THE CALL TO THE COMMON MEAL

Once every week, usually on Sunday the community will be called to gather at the common table for this the high symbolic activity of the Order.

THE SETTING

The tables provided for seating of the Order are arranged in rectangular fashion with seating for host and hostess at center front, 'The banner of the Order with the Iron Cross is located also at center front. The three pronged candelabra is situated at the head table to be lighted as the Common Meal service begins. Tables should be set with an extra cup or glass for the wine and a Common Meal service at each place setting. Songs chosen by the host and hostess may also be placed on the tables but not on top of the Common Meal liturgy.

Assignments for hostess and Celebrant are made by Order section. The Celebrant is an ordained minister who is a member of the Order.

THE OPENING

The Order gathers at the tables and remains standing behind their chairs. Songs chosen by host and hostess are sung, led by the hostess. Accountability is held by college assignments. The hostess calls for the accountability and receives it in the Word of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Order is then seated.

THE COMMON MEAL

The host is the Celebrant of the Common Meal. He begins the meal with a contextual statement -- usually relatively brief and pertinent to the present -- life of the Order and the particular situation of the Common Meal setting. The Celebrant (who is responsible for the total meal service) then proceeds with the liturgy. He may have the wine and bread brought to the table during the liturgy or may have arranged for it to be present at the head table at the beginning of the meal. The Celebrant calls for prayers of the Church to be offered during the passing of the bread and wine.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, the celebrant turns the meal to the hostess again who asks for introduction of guests and warmly welcomes them to participate in the meal.

At this time and not before, the serving team rises to bring the food to the tables. After introduction and reception of guests, the hostess gives the cue to begin eating by saying, "Let us feast."

THE CELEBRATIONS

Shortly after the feasting has begun the Celebrant rises and calls for occasions of special significance to be celebrated by the Order. Births, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and deaths are the common celebrations. Special others may be celebrated at the discretion of the Celebrant. Songs appropriate are the Happy Birthday, Happy Anniversary Song, The Ascension, and Grace and Peace or others deemed appropriate. New Order members and sojourners are introduced at the indication beforehand of the Order Sector and they are received by singing Grace and Peace.

The mood here is joyous and seriously exuberant and the Celebrant should encourage this mood while retaining the dignity of the entire meal.

THE SYMBOLIC REPORTS

The hostess now assumes responsibility for leading the reporting of Divisions, Colleges, and Seminars. She calls for each report and sees that the reports are short and symbolic in nature and pertinent to the occasion. After each group (all Division reports, for example) she calls for the Order to celebrate the reports by singing Praise The Lord all Nations, Praise Ye the Lord, and Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow.

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The hostess now calls for announcements which are necessary for the Order life. It is preferable that these be cleared with the hostess before they are made and the hostess needs only to allow most pertinent ones to be made at this time.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND ABSOLUTION

The Celebrant designates an order member to come forth at this time and hold the accountability ritual. This person makes a short statement of context, calls for someone else who will hold him accountable and pronounce the absolution, and then proceeds to call for the accountability to the rule of the Order by asking the first person at the end row of tables if they have been faithful to the rule of the Order during the past week, addressing the person with his Christian name. The procedure then is that each person in turn states his Christian name and either Yes/No or No/Yes. When all have answered excepting the leader of the accountability, the one appointed to pronounce the absolution asks the question of him and pronounces the absolution to the entire body.

THE CLOSING RITUAL

The hostess calls the Order to stand and sends the Order forth to its task with a statement such as "I send you forth to be the Church," followed by "The Lord be with you" "And with thy spirit" Amen. Amen.

The Order then proceeds from the room having once more dramatically enacted the most highly symbolic rite in its community life.

THE DAILY OFFICE OF THE ORDER

"To have a god is to possess a selfunderstanding, and to be a self is to have a god. Worship, then, is both, and at the same time, an honoring of our god and an enactment of our selfunderstanding.

Christian worship is the portrayal of those gathered as the forgiven ones, the thankful ones, the dedicated ones. This is just who they must grasp themselves to be when God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit becomes their God."

Joseph Mathews

THE ACTIVITY

The Daily Office of the Order is that primal symbolic activity which is enacted every morning in the life of the community to call the community once again to consciousness and to make a decision to its affirmation of life and responsibility in the task it has assumed.

It is a symbolic drama entirely separate in purpose and style from other aspects of community life such as intellectual study and task assignments. The community are those who have made the basic decision to live as individuals received as Good by life itself in the Mystery and honor all others as received also.

THE SETTING

The worship room arrangement provides the important setting for this dramatic enactment in the life of the Order. The large redoes with the double cross hangs at one end of the room which is designated as liturgical east, The apposite end is symbolically the World and some representation for this may be located there. The seats are arranged in rows facing the center of the room and facing one another, The table is located in the middle of the center aisle with a cross and containers for the offering as the only articles on it. It is covered with a cloth which is, like the redoes, of the appropriate color of the church year season. Chairs for the 2nd and 3rd liturgists are placed at each end of the room with the 1st liturgist at liturgical east and the others at the opposite end.

THE LITURGISTS AND THEIR ROLES

Liturgists for the Office are assigned through the Order Section so that these assignments may cut across college and division and hold the pole of corporateness of the total body.

The roles assigned are as follows.

First Liturgist is responsible for the entire service and should see that all persons are aware of their roles and that the room is arranged properly. He leads the service in assuming the major liturgical role in the drama. He must set the pace seeing that the liturgy moves rapidly, does not drag. He should use his normal speaking voice...his public voice. His voice must be loud, clear and he must read his part simply, being careful to avoid a "singsong" effect.

Second Liturgist leads the community in the liturgy and should cut First Liturgist's last word. He also reads with the First Liturgist during the offering.

Third Liturgist reads the Old Testament, begins the offering, walks to the table during the doxology, and leads the left side during the prayer.

Fourth Liturgist reads the New Testament, begins the offering, walks to the table during the doxology, and leads the right side during the prayer.

Fifth Liturgist Witness. offers the contemporary Word, helps in receiving the offering and returning it to the table, receives the Peace and initiates it on his side of the room (right side.) Leads the right side.

Sixth Liturgist receives the Peace and initiates it on his side of the room (left side). Returns to the table with the Witness and leads the left side.

THE INSTRUMENTS

The instruments to be used are a gong, drums, and small gong, bell or two sticks. The Gong (large preferably) is used for the three peals during the procession and the three peals during the recession. The small gong or other instrument is used to signal all the community turns, kneeling, and rising. The drums are used beginning with Act II and moving with more intense rhythm to the passing of the Peace.

THE GATHERING

The Order gathers, seats itself in assigned areas if such are designated. Liturgists gather outside worship area, form the processional line according to assigned liturgical roles: First Liturgist followed by Second and Third Liturgist who walk side by side, followed by the Fourth Liturgist and then the Fifth and Sixth Liturgists, who also walk side by side.

Those assigned to provide sound effects will gather at assigned posts before the beginning of the liturgy also.

THE PROCESSIONAL

At the sound of the first peal which is given at the indication of the First Liturgist, the Liturgists will proceed to their stations, the Community rising and kneeling as the liturgy indicates.

THE OFFICE

ACT I At the sound of the small gong or bell the First Liturgist calls the community to enter the drama of their life understanding with the ascription. The service proceeds as the liturgy indicates.

ACT II As the First Liturgist approaches the cue for the scripture reading, the person reading the scripture should move to position just to one side of the Table and begin reading as soon as the First Liturgist finishes the line,...there should be no pause between the last line of the First Liturgist and the first line of the scripture. (Scripture readings are listed in the yearly lectionary.) They should be kept brief and in cases where the lectionary indicates long readings, the First Liturgist may be consulted to cut the passage for a shorter reading. The Witness is brief no longer than three minutes. This is a time for a relevant statement of the Word which addresses the spiritual life of the community at a depth level. (The Witness is a symbolic activity, and not a time for lecture.)

ACT III The Act of Dedication requires that individuals of the community offer Prayers of petition and intercession. The person offering the prayer ends with an "Amen" which is responded to with a community "Amen" (The First Liturgist need not announce "now prayers of

Petition..."except in such cases as RS-I course where there are persons present who are unfamiliar with the service. In such case he should say, "Let those who would offer up prayers for the Church etc., or something similar.

THE OFFERING

The Offering is the opportunity to symbolically give of oneself and the appropriate offering is a small coin such as a penny.

At the cue from the First Liturgist "Beloved in Christ, let us offer..." the Third and Fourth and Sixth Liturgists walk to the Table. The Third and Fourth Liturgists take the baskets and all return to their respective ends of the room, The baskets are given to the community thru the East. As soon as the Witness and the Sixth Liturgist get the baskets, they start walking toward the table thus signaling the First Liturgist to change to calling for the community to rise. The Third and Fourth Liturgists also walk to the Table, All four Liturgists stand facing the Table during the Doxology...the Witness and Sixth Liturgist still holding the baskets. At the end of the Doxology they place the baskets on the Table and all four Liturgists face the East during the prayer, returning to their positions at the "Amen."

PASSING OF THE PEACE

The Passing of the Peace is initiated by the First Liturgist passing the Peace to the Second Liturgist who in turn passes it to the Witness and the Sixth Liturgist. The Witness and the Sixth Liturgist then pass the Peace to the first person in each row on their respective sides. The statement is "Christian name" and the "Peace of God is yours this day," Clapping, swaying and dancing movements are a part of this activity according to the desire of the participant. At all times in the worship service the participant is invited to sway or move his body in whatever fashion is appropriate to the particular drama going on.

THE RECESSIONAL

After the benediction is pronounced, the Liturgists proceed out of the room as they proceeded in at the sound of the first peal. At the sound of the third peal the community proceeds out having enacted once again this day the daily drama of their unique stance and story of life.

THE BREAKFAST CELEBRATION

"The fellowship of the table has a festive quality. It is a constantly recurring reminder in the midst of our everyday work of God's resting after his work, of the Sabbath as the meaning and goal of the week and its toil. Our life is not only travail and labor, it is also refreshment and joy in the goodness of God. We labor, but God nourishes and sustains us. And this is the reason for celebrating. The table fellowship of Christians implies obligation. It is our daily bread that we eat, not my own. We share our bread. Thus we are firmly bound to one another not only in the Spirit but in our whole physical being. The bread that is given to our fellowship links us together in a firm covenant. Now none dares go hungry as long as another has bread, and he who breaks this fellowship of the physical spirit also breaks the fellowship of the Spirit."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

THE ACTIVITY

The breakfast celebration is a secondary symbolic activity of the Order and is crucial to the life of the community particularly as it is the meal celebration where total community gathers daily. The procedure followed and the methodology used are highly significant in producing the dramatic flow of the meal and maintaining its symbolic nature. It should perhaps be emphasized that this meal is a symbolic celebration and is discontinuous with other activities of order life which are not of symbolic nature. The participant comes to the meal as a celebrant who, having enacted that drama of worship, now feasts with his brothers in the Word, symbolizing his participation in the World as the representative of the Mystery.

THE SETTING

The tables are set in rectangular fashion with a place for the host and hostess at the center front. bongs chosen by the host and hostess may be places on the tables. The roles of priest and rabbi are assigned to the host and hostess and these assignments are made through the Order Section.

THE OPENING

The Order gathers at the tables and remains standing behind their chairs. The Priest leads the songs. Accountability is held by college assignments. The Priest calls for the accountability and receives it in the Word of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The opening ritual, "Praise the Lord" "Christ is Risen" "Amen" "Amen's is repeated. The Order is then seated. The priest offers a prayer and asks for introduction of guests. She or he welcomes the guest to the table and invites all to feast.

THE MEAL AND SCRIPTURE

Shortly after the eating of the meal begins, the priest rises and reads aloud the capital verse for the day from the yearly lectionary including whatever additional scripture may be needed to set the context. He then asks questions of the community to enable the address of the scripture for our community to be expressed by one or several members. His intent is to hold before the Order the tradition as it is given to us in the Scripture and allow its wisdom and objectivity to address and heal lives as it has so many times in the past. This activity is symbolic in nature. When the priest determines that a proper address has been made he then cuts off the conversation by turning to the rabbi for news announcements.

THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

This is an important part of the meal celebration but one also easily misunderstood. The intention here is to symbolically hold before the Order the world in its present state of being. It is not in any way a time for the gathering of knowledge about world goings on, nor is it a time to discuss at length and come to conclusions about dealing with problems of the world. Therefore the most appropriate way of conducting this is for the rabbi to ask simply for news which is significant to the Order this morning. It is unnecessary to ask for categories - local, international, etc. -- as these may force the exclusion of pertinent news and the inclusion of impertinent news. Some mornings it may be the local news which is of special significance -- other mornings news of international scope. The rabbi can use discretion and freedom to cut off or encourage the conversation in order that the particular news items be stated briefly, questions of clarification asked and the particular significance to the life of the Order articulated.

THE CLOSING

The priest again assumes the leadership and calls for announcements for the day's activities -- first for special announcements and then for announcement of the time for meeting of Divisions. The latter is important symbolically in holding before the Order the task to be done and calling the community to the task. Division announcements are made briefly by stating the time of meeting whether by section or total division and perhaps the location of the meeting. Special announcements should always be those of importance to the total Order and not something that could better be handled by personal conversation. The persons making announcements are advised to keep in mind the symbolic importance of this meal and the effect of each statement made in this context.

The priest then calls for a member of the Order to send the community into the day, and following that sending forth statement he leads the ritual "The Lord be With You" "and With Thy Spirit" "Amen" "Amen" thus closing the meal.

The community proceeds from the room again freshly aware of its unique stance in the midst of life and its unique task in history.

OF SOLEMIZATION OF MATRIMONY

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face -- of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honorable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.

The occasion of a covenanting of marriage in the life of the Order, as the Church has always experienced, is a time of grave and sober reflection and decision relative to the possibilities of the creation of a new family and the way in which that family would direct the future.

THE DECISION TO COVENANT

Two individuals who have considered seriously the demands and consequences of covenanting themselves in marriage during a period of "courtship" may decide that it is their task to actualize such a covenant.

Upon this decision they will ask for an appointment for conversation with their college priors. At this time they shall be questioned on behalf of the entire community quite extensively concerning their decision. (Their particular family plans may be presented at this time including life timelines, etc.)

If the priors of the College so recommend, the Conferers will then be consulted for their approval. If such approval is given, the decision is taken to the entire community of the Order for its approval.

THE READING OF THE BANS

Four weeks before the day of the service of covenant an assigned ordained member of the Order will read the bans of marriage at the Daily Office immediately preceding the prayer of petition.

The statement is "I hereby publish the Bans of Marriage between woman and man to be held in the Great Hall of the Order on date. If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony ye are to declare it. This is the first time of asking." The second reading will take place in two weeks. The same statement is -- read except "This is the second time of asking."

The 'Third and Final Reading occurs one week before the day of service of the covenant. With the consent of the community at the reading of the Third Bans, the Week of Celebration begins.

THE WEEK OF CELEBRATION

The Schedule for the Week of Celebration is to be posted along with the symbol of the new family in a public place for the Order's observance.

The Preparation Dinner is held with representatives assigned by the Order to have conversation relative to the plans, decisions, and questions that this particular couple would have in anticipating the marriage. Special decor and menu are arranged.

The Bride's Preparation Rite is held by the women of the Order. Special conversation and presentation of symbolic gifts relative to the female role in marriage are to be held at that time. Context is set with appropriate

decor and refreshments.

The Groom's Preparation Rite held with the men of the Order is similarly celebrated.

The arrival of the families of the couple to be married is an important part of the celebration. Certain persons from the directly involved Colleges are assigned especially to prepare for their participation and comfort. The families are responsible for this marriage and are to participate fully in the plans and ceremonial rituals .. as they will participate later in the ceremony in acting out their responsibilities in enabling the new family.

The Rehearsal Dinner takes place the evening before the ceremony. The family as well as all persons assigned to participate in the ceremony as liturgists, ministers, etc. are present. This is particularly a time for conversation that enables the family to understand the particular stance toward marriage of this Community. This is also a time for the family to honor the couple to be married and the community of the Order as it is represented by certain members.

THE SERVICE OF THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

The Service of the Covenant takes place in the context of the Daily Office of the community. All the liturgists and the minister are assigned by the Order. Songs of the Historical Church and Movement precede the Daily Office and greet the procession of the wedding party into the congregation as they take their place in the congregation.

The wedding ceremony begins in the Act of Dedication after the Creed, "The Lord be with thee." And with Thy spirit." The community be seated." (or stand) The particular denominational order of the service may be chosen by the couple and the Order representatives and the minister.

The Rubrics - The minister makes the charge to the community, asks for the presentation of the State marriage license (which the best man will have) as indication of the approval of the civil establishment of this marriage, and makes the charge to the two persons preparing to marry.

First vows are the vows made to the congregation as representatives of the Church and the couple is asked to turn facing the congregation for these vows. Second vows are made to each other with the couple turning to face one another.

At the time of the prayers the minister may ask the congregation to offer prayers for these two people, for this new family, for the unborn children, for the Church.

After the minister pronounces the couple man and wife, they kneel to receive the Blessings of the Church. (The minister may ask the family, members of the Colleges, and/or representatives of other appropriate relationships to come forth.)

THE WEDDING CELEBRATION

The Wedding Feast following the ceremony is a time of joyous thanksgiving and celebration. This is the time when the assembled community offers promises for this couple, The reception of guests occurs at this time.

Special goods and drink may be served. Simplicity is entirely appropriate for this celebration, and any activities beyond the most simple should be considered carefully by all concerned.

