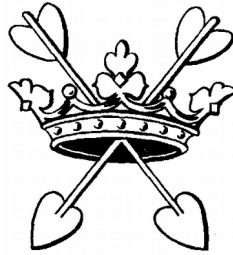


The Parish of St. Edmund, King and Martyr



The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

UPDATE

March 7, 2004 - **St. Thomas Aquinas**

April Schedule

April 4	Sunday	-	Palm Sunday
April 8	Thursday	-	Maundy
April 9	Friday	-	Good Friday
April 10	Saturday	-	Holy Saturday
April 11	Sunday	-	Easter Day
April 18	Sunday	-	The Octave Day of Easter
April 25	Sunday	-	St. Mark the Evangelist

Service Times and Location

(1) All Services are held in the Chapel at Luther Village on the Park - 139 Father David Bauer Drive in Waterloo.

(2) On Sundays, **Matins** is sung at **10:00 a.m.** (The **Litany** on the first Sunday of the month), and the **Holy Eucharist** is celebrated (sung) at **10:30 a.m.**

(3) On weekdays - **Holy Days** and **Days of Obligation** (Diocesan Ordo) - the **Holy Eucharist** is *usually* celebrated at **7:00 p.m.** when the Chapel is available - please phone to confirm.

Notes and Comments

- 1) Our Ordinary's **Bit** - Lambeth 1978 - the third of three parts - this page.
- 2) More on the Culture of Death - we continue down the slippery slope - **Infanticide for Disabled Children** - see page 3.
- 3) The final portion of **Principles of Morality** by Fr. Michael Shier - see page 4.
- 4) A few words on the new liturgies - **Liturgical Notes** by John Hunwicke - see page 6.
- 5) An appreciation of *Matthew* 3. 12 - **A Good Threshing** by Patrick Henry Reardon - see page 7.
- 6) Building a bridge in Africa - **The Giving Bridge** by Helen Glover - see page 8.
- 7) A distressing piece about how Mass is celebrated - **Winnie The Pooh, Catholic Priest** - see page 9.

The Bishop's Bit

Pages from the past: lines from Lambeth

Dispatches to the diocese of Matabeleland from the Lambeth Conference of 1978, held in Canterbury.

PART III

In "my" committee, the one discussing Marxism (I had volunteered for the committee on sex), a Nigerian was fluent on the subject. He had travelled several times in Eastern Europe. He had worked in an African country which had embraced Marx. He was firmly anti. A bishop from Kenya knew communism to be bad - had not President Kenyatta told them so? - but please would somebody tell him what it was. A bishop from Tanzania knew communism to be good - had not

President Nyerere told them so? - but please would somebody tell him what it was. An American bishop said we ought to be booted and spurred in time for tea. No prize for guessing what state he hails from. And our English theological consultant, Professor David Jenkins (later a notorious Bishop of Durham), would have secured the approval of Marx rather than the approval of Senator Joseph McCarthy.

In the plenary sessions in the conference hall the Third World bishops, now in the majority, have been at a disadvantage. They have different ways of arriving at consensus. Not for them the rigmarole of amendments to amendments, substantive motions, unopposed motions, taken at the nod, only four minutes per speech. It has been the Americans and the English who have dominated the full sessions. I don't know how the Ugandans did in their group discussions, but in public discretion has been the better part of valour. No wonder, with Amin's goons filming their every move. Other bishops also come from difficult countries, Cuba, Mocambique, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, where Amnesty International takes a dim view of the British government. In the pub, and at the so called *Peace* at mass, the noisiest are the Americans and the Australians.

The English are the most skilled at drafting, at compromise resolutions in particular. The newspapers are unable to interpret the statement on priestesses, which in effect has been pure *Alice in Wonderland*, "Everybody has won and all shall have prizes". But I mustn't give the impression priestesses have been our only concern. Only a few have been prepared to condemn the World Council of Churches and its support for terrorists. All have been united in condemning South Africa and Rhodesia. African governments committing the same injustices have not been criticized by resolution even though Bishop Tutu from Johannesburg said, "In independent Africa there is often less freedom than there used to be under colonial rule."

A surprising difficulty has been finding others. For example, apart from processing next to him in the Cathedral, when we were not supposed to chat, I have been unable to locate Bishop Nyanja, who is our new Bishop of Malawi in our Province of Central Africa, like me a baby on our bench of bishops. I have also wanted to talk with Fr Ephraim Mosotshane, Principal of St Bede's Theological College in Umtata, South Africa, where we have an ordinand studying (this student, now The Right Reverend Wilson Sitsheso, Ph.D. is the present Bishop of Matabeleland, who welcomed me back to the diocese).

I have been glad to belong to an *ad hoc* group meeting in "spare time" and calling itself *Revelation*. It is made up of Catholics and evangelicals who oppose priestesses. Its members included the Archbishop of Sydney, the Bishops of Bermuda (a fellow member of CR), Chichester, Truro, my old friend George Swartz, Suffragan of Cape Town, and the Irishman, Liam Manning of George in South Africa. I have also been interested to belong to an All Africa Caucus. The exiled Bishop of Namibia received a round of applause, but the five exiled bishops from Uganda did not, neither was Archbishop Janani Luwum mentioned, their martyred primate. The Archbishop of Kenya got much applause when he told us that he has twelve children. A Greek Orthodox archbishop, a monk, next to me whispered, "It's Mrs Kenya we should be clapping. What's he done?"

The Anglican Consultative Council has come in for some criticism, a committee which meets between Lambeths, which only occur every five years. A bishop is controlled by his relationship with his clergy, people and archbishop. The ACC seems answerable to nobody.

I shall be glad when this expensive waste of time and money is over. I long to return home.

+Robert Mercer CR

By **The Bishop Ordinary - The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada**

From here and there

a) Washington, DC (LifeNews.com) -- On Friday, President Bush named Sunday [January 18] as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday for 2004 and encouraged pro-life advocates to "recognize this day with appropriate ceremonies in our homes and places of worship and to reaffirm our commitment to respecting the life and dignity of every human being." "Each person, however frail or defenseless, has a place and a purpose in this world," Bush said in the proclamation. The event, similar to ones Bush has made official in previous years of his administration, is meant to "celebrate the gift of life and our commitment to building a society of compassion and humanity," Bush explained. "Today, the principles of human dignity enshrined in the Declaration of Independence - that all persons are created equal and possess the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness - continue to guide us," Bush said.

b) What a child doesn't receive he can seldom later give. **P.D. James**

c) Funny how we believe what newspapers say, but question what the Bible says.

d) A typical 'debate' on a CBC talk show means two liberals being interviewed by a socialist. From an ad for the **Western Standard** - a new news magazine.

Infanticide for Disabled Children

London, England (LifeNews.com) - A British government official has sparked outrage by suggesting that children with disabilities should be killed. John Harris told a meeting of government officials that he saw no distinction between a late-term abortion and euthanizing a child with disabilities shortly after birth. In his comments, made to a governmental committee looking at human technologies, Harris endorsed infanticide

in cases of a child carrying a genetic disorder that remained undetected during pregnancy. "I don't think infanticide is always unjustifiable," he said. "There is a very widespread and accepted practice of infanticide in most countries." Harris, who is a professor of bioethics at Manchester University, would not respond to media queries about what types of disabilities should lead to infanticide or if he believes there is an age by which children should not be killed. The remarks drew strong criticism from pro-life organizations. Julia Millington, political director of the Pro-Life Party, said, "Infanticide is murder and is against the law. It is frightening to think that university students are being educated by somebody who endorses the killing of newborn babies."

Sun Dogs

The sun slanted down and dazzled my eyes
That ice-cold January morning;
The snow lay deep, the sky brilliant blue,
An omen for bad weather warning.

Like sentries standing attention, on watch,
Two Sun Dogs stood broad and tall,
Their rainbow columns reached high in the
sky,
Glowing. - I felt just 'ant-small'.

At the base of a rainbow, so Irish folk tell,
Lies a Leprechaun's pot full of gold.
I wondered what Sun Dogs hid at their feet
In Canada's winters so cold.

I wanted to drive right into the sun,
The feet of those Sun Dogs I sought.
Would I find treasure like Leprechauns
leave?
I laughed at my fantasy thought!

By **Helen E. Glover**

Principles of Morality - IV

So you see there is every reason for the

Church to claim that it is its own institution with its own laws, its own customs, its own codes of household behaviour, its own principles derived from the Apostolic commission. There is every reason for the Church to refuse to be subservient to the secular power.

I can give you more examples. From the fourth century onward the whole weight of Imperial influence was directed to turning the church-body into a pale imitation of the Imperial body politic, where church law was imperial decree, immorality was a crime, and the Bishops were ecclesiastical civil servants; and to a large degree this was successful, especially in the East. The right of the Church to be a free Church, with a body expressing and not hampering her spirit was maintained by Rome and the West. In the eleventh century, however, Rome was faced with a need for centralization, and an urgent need for rapid centralization at that, if the Western Emperors and Kings were not to make good their claim to the role of Justinian. She therefore overlaid the old constitutional body of church government with a centralization borrowed from the political conceptions of ancient Rome, via the bureaucratic refinements that had been added to it by Byzantium.

At the Reformation in England, this general outline of the medieval system was retained, with the Sovereign in the place of the Pope. At first there was hope that the system might work like this. Elizabeth and the Stuarts retained the spiritual courts, the spiritual assembly of the Convocations, and even projected some reforms of the Canon Law. But in the end these were allowed to fade away: what seemed to be the simpler solution prevailed, and English Christianity, having been allowed to die to the Corpus Juris Canonici, was inserted neatly into the body politic of the realm of England. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction over morals withered away. 'Hurrah' says practically everyone. But if you won't have a spiritual law, you get a secular one. And so some old spiritual offences are elevated by sporadic acts of Parliament into statutory crimes. Sodomy in 1533;

abortion in 1803 and male homosexual practices in 1861. But by the end of the nineteenth century it had been pretty clearly demonstrated that Criminal Law could not do duty for Canon Law. It was too harsh, too crass, too legalistic. It did not have the spiritual authority. The secular courts did not have the skill to deal with questions of baptismal regeneration, incense, the mixing of water with wine at the offertory. Convocation insisted on reviving. Bishops, finding that they got no where by standing on their statutory legal powers, fell back on their inherent spiritual authority with much more promise of success, and the Church of England recovered her spiritual body.

However, if the Church is to have a substantial effect on the practical behaviour of Christians, it must have a recognised and accepted moral law. Anglican thought had neglected moral theology for 300 years, thinking that the void could be filled on the one hand by state legislation, and on the other by the individual conscience, however misguided or ill-instructed that might be. The result of this was shewn in the debate over the Wolfenden report - the general ignorance of any distinction between sin and crime, and the general assumption, therefore, that anything not prosecuted as a crime was allowable to those who have a taste for it. Sin becomes, even in the opinion of many devout church people, entirely a matter for private judgement. The idea of a common conscience of the church, embodied in clear codifications, and obliging the individual conscience is regarded by many with horror, as a totalitarian suppression of individual freedom. Why? Because most of the population think there are only two alternatives - doing what you think you want or being made to do against your will what someone else thinks you ought to do. The choice there is freedom or law. It takes no account of spiritual direction, moral skill and the fact that the moral demand on each of us grows with our increasing maturity. The Christian position is thus quite different. A spiritual law obliges in conscience. It leads you to do of your own freewill what the Church

obliges you to do. This is a quaint and puzzling conception to the non-Christian, but one which should be quite familiar to us. Moral theology shapes our lives. It will often tell us that things are wrong when we feel they are all right and vice versa.

Canon Law is regarded as a joke by those who spend their time evading all Law. It will be unenforceable and a good thing too. But canon law has always had an innocent disregard for how it is to be enforced; for it proceeds from the assumption that Christian disciples want and desire discipline.

What are we to do in practice? We are to use our heads. We are to ally ourselves with anyone who defends marriage as instructed by Bishop Wilkinson, but we are to be cautious about the Roman church's position on annulment. An awful lot of marriages get annulled. We are also to be cautious about the Church's position on prenuptial agreements. The suggestion is that if the couple have a prenuptial agreement as to what to do if things don't work out, that implies they are not consenting till death do us part. This is surely treating Church Law in the same way you would treat secular Law - looking for loopholes rather than seeking to do what is right. Further, not all pre-nuptial agreements imply bad faith. Where marriage involves the fusion of large inheritances then there may need to be some pre-nuptial agreement simply to protect dependents of those properties in the event of the marriage not working.

What else can we do in practice? We are to use our heads. We can point out that the extermination of the Jews could not have been achieved by Hitler without his superb railway system. And one new abortuary in Vancouver is situated close to the sky train. That should surely liven up a few coffee mornings.

What should we do? We need to use our heads. Bishop Gore warned the Lambeth Conference of 1930 that the decision to allow contraception for hard cases would be something they would bitterly regret.

Hard cases make bad laws. Of course, if the husband comes home drunk the wife is right to protect herself, but it is contemptible to conclude from that that it is right for everyone in any circumstance. Bishop Wilkinson tells me of a Roman Catholic publication on contraception which treats Bishop Gore as a prophet. He also tells me that the only country in Africa where A.I.D.S. is declining is Uganda where the RC Bishops preach abstinence as the solution.

We should not be intimidated by Trudeau's smug and self-righteous declaration that the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation.

By **The Reverend Michael Shier** - the final portion!

The Squirrel Dilemma

There were three small churches in a small Canadian town, Roman Catholic, United, and Anglican. Each was over-run by pesky squirrels.

One day the United Church called a meeting of their members to decide what to do. After much prayer and consideration they decided that the squirrels were predestined to be there and they shouldn't interfere with God's divine will.

A committee was formed in the Roman Catholic Church to decide what action to take. They, too, decided they were not in a position to harm any of God's creatures. So they humanely trapped the squirrels and set them free a few kilometres outside town. Three days later they were all back.

It was the Anglicans who were able to come up with the best and most effective solution. They baptized the squirrels and registered them as members of the Church. Now they only see them at Christmas and Easter.

Thanks to **Dora Vidler**

Liturgical Notes

Audemus dicere

'Father.' How that word does make a priest jump out of his skin. Deferential, you think? You must be joking. Demanding, even accusing, is how it so often seems. And God must have felt a similar paranoia, until about 1985. Prayer so often began with that peremptory demand for attention, whether it was fervent Evangelicals ad-libbing a lazy intercession ('Father, we just want to say') or Roman Catholics replacing Almighty and Everlastings with the warm intimacy of 'Father'. After 1985ish, of course, everything changed and 'Father' became politically mega-incorrect. The first Person of the Glorious Trinity now has a much less hectic time.

Older worshippers will remember the old invitation to 'Our Father', '. . . we are bold to say'. This is missing in *Common Worship* and the current RC translations. Yet it represents the ancient formulae of both Latin and Greek liturgies. But why is it 'bold' to call God 'Father'? Surely, all humans are children of the same loving Father?

Yet that is not the impression one gets from the New Testament. By merely being human, we are 'far' from God. It is only in and through Christ that we come 'close', in other words, by sheer, unmerited grace. Christ is the only real Son of the Father; in becoming part of him in baptism we share his Sonship 'by adoption'. It is only thus that we can 'dare' to address his Father as Our Father; to take his *Abba, Father* (Mark 14.36) onto our lips (Galatians 4.6).

Those ancient introductions to the Our Father humbly acknowledge this by recalling that it is by instruction in Christ's School of Prayer that we speak thus. The earliest Roman form could be rendered 'Taught by divine schoolmastery and

moulded by divine education, we are bold to say'; later modified, probably to avoid unstylish repetition, to 'Admonished by saving precepts and . . .'; paraphrased by Cranmer (1549) 'As our Saviour Christe hath commaunded and taught us, we are bolde to saye'.

The new Vatican policy for vernacular liturgical texts requires accuracy of translation and denies the translator any right to dream up alternative forms remote from the original Latin. It will be interesting to see what they come up with.

By **John Hunwicke** - the compiler of the *ORDO*

A Good Threshing

Perhaps among the least appreciated, and seldom thought on, descriptions of Jesus our Lord is the one given by John the Baptist, 'His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean out his threshing floor; and gather his wheat into the barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire' (Matthew 3.12).

Violent separation

Threshing is a violent activity, which consists in pounding the harvested grain repeatedly on a stone floor with a shovel or a flail, in order to separate it from the husks which enclose it. The discarded husks are called chaff. When this beating of the grain has been done, the thresher uses his shovel to throw it into the air, so that the wind will carry away the light and useless chaff, leaving the heavier kernels to fall once more to the threshing floor. This latter action is called winnowing.

Yes, threshing and winnowing are violent activities; they are likewise, if one may say so, very judgmental activities. Threshing and winnowing are emphatic, even ferocious ways of asserting 'this, and not that'. The thresher addresses the grain and the chaff and makes an aggressive distinction, as it were, 'You stay put, but you get out of here.' The

separation of the two things is truly final. The grain and the chaff grew up together, but they will never be together again. *Come to judgement*

This definitive separation of wheat and chaff, which means the final acceptance and rejection of human decisions, is essential to the Gospel itself, because it affirms the everlasting significance of those decisions made in the course of time. Consequently, this biblical threshing stands directly at variance with those religious philosophies constructed on 'the myth of the eternal return', in which all human decisions rendered in the course of history are 'subject to further review', so to speak, and ultimate correction in an afterlife, in order to achieve a universal reconciliation. This latter heresy was appropriately condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553.

The biblical teaching about God's judgmental threshing, then, is asserted as though to answer the question contained in the provocative title of a book by a well known theologian of the twentieth century, *Dare We Hope 'That All Men Be Saved'? (Allversohnung?)*. No, we do not dare to hope for such a thing. It is a delirious fantasy, neither a proper object of Christian hope, nor a proper subject for Christian speculation.

In fact, St John of Mount Sinai warns us of the grave spiritual danger of even entertaining such a thought (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 5, 'On Repentance'). If wheat and chaff are ultimately the same thing, then human choice is a mirage, human history only a theatrical production, and the death and resurrection of Christ ultimately meaningless. For this reason, Jesus as Saviour must not be disconnected from Jesus as Thresher.

A threshing floor cleansed

Just where in the gospels, however, do we detect Jesus acting as Thresher? In answering that question, most readers of the Bible would probably refer to Our

Lord's driving the money changers from the temple, and they would surely be correct in that reference. When Jesus drove the money changers from the temple, an event recorded in all four canonical gospels, it was the most eschatological of actions.

Jesus thereby affirmed that the temple really is a precinct separated from an 'outside', where are found 'dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and whoever loves and practices a lie' (Revelation 22.15). Thus, the story of Jesus purging the temple ends in enmity, not in a peaceful resolution. Similarly, the Bible's final book does not portray an afterlife of universal reconciliation, but an everlasting separation of wheat and chaff.

Even that earthly temple purged by Jesus was constructed on a threshing floor (2 Chronicles 3.1), Arauna's ancient rock where David's soul, for his final sin, was flailed by the angel of judgement (2 Samuel 24.18-25). Indeed, the place of man's worship, where he meets God and places himself under the divine gaze, is ever the hard surface of his purging.

The work of prayer

Prayer itself is a pounding of the soul, that the wheat may be beaten free of the chaff. Hence, in this world the true temple is necessarily constructed on the threshing floor. There, before the face of God, the heart is afflicted in repentance, the contrite and broken heart that God will not despise; indeed, this very breaking of the heart is the sacrifice that God requires (Psalms 51(50).17).

Such is the authentic worship of God in the soul's true temple, the prayer of repentant sinners who never cease to beat their breasts and plead for the divine mercy (Luke 18.13; 23.48).

By **Patrick Henry Reardon** - a senior editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* www.touchstonemag.com

The Giving Bridge

As a child of the nineteen twenties, two things were said to be impossibilities. One was putting a man on the moon and the other was to build a tunnel under the English Channel connecting England and France. As everyone knows both of these have now been accomplished. Here is the true story of two men who were responsible for building a bridge in a remote part of South Africa in a place where there had never been a bridge before.

The name 'Halcrow Engineering Co' of London, England, is synonymous with the building of the Channel Tunnel. Two ex-Halcrow engineers, Roger Sinnott and Robin Woodd are responsible for this miracle. Roger Sinnott, my nephew, is semi-retired from Halcrow, while Robin Woodd worked for them in the 1960's and early 70's. Thanks to these two the villagers of a remote region of South Africa will no longer have to risk life and limb to make a livelihood, visit the nearest market town of Kokstad, or go to Church.

Robin is a friend of Bishop Geoff Davies*, the Anglican Bishop of Umzimvubu, about a three hours drive south of Durban. Villagers and adjacent communities in the surrounding hills, in excess of some 5,000 souls, have to cross the Umzimvubu River to gain access to the main dirt road leading to Kokstad. These people are subsistence farmers growing small quantities of maize and vegetables, and rearing a few cattle.

For much of the year the Umzimvubu River is a gentle river which can be forded, but during the rainy season, October to February, it swells to a full-flooded torrent over two metres deep, carrying downstream tree-trunks and other debris on its rushing way to the sea. There are three privately run ropeway 'boxes' at about two km. intervals, suspended on cables, large enough to hold one person or a small amount of goods, pulled by hand when the water

level rises. Numerous graves along the river bank tell of the hazards of crossing. The community long expressed their need for a pedestrian bridge to the Bishop of Umzimvubu, and as the Diocese had more recently been involved in starting an agricultural project on the remote side of the river, the need for a bridge was evident. Several meetings were held, and the outcome was that in 2002 the project was undertaken by the Chartered Civil Engineers, Robin Woodd and Roger Sinnott, who would design and oversee the building of the bridge and arrange for financing at no cost (contributions were received from various organizations including Halcrow), while the community would contribute unskilled labour for free. The two engineers spent the spring and summer of 2003 alternately working at the chosen site. The type of bridge considered viable was a pedestrian suspension bridge with a main span of some 48 metres, and with a tower at either end.

There were many challenges as is expressed in an account by Roger's wife, Sue, who accompanied him with the thought of a relaxing holiday, sitting on the river-bank and reading. Instead she found herself pressed into service, loading and unloading 50lb. bags of cement, toting stones and sand along with the women and children, climbing ladders, and being, in general, a 'go-fer'! There were broken-down vehicles, blunt saws, and always, the unfriendly terrain to cope with. Planning ahead was difficult for it was never known how many would turn up for work. If there was the possibility of earning a little hard cash, the unpaid work was given second place. Language could be quite a problem, and Sue often found herself calming the engineer as well as encouraging the workers. Once the bridge was nearing completion it was difficult to keep the villagers from walking across it, thus impeding work in progress.

At last the project came to an end, the bridge was completed and handed over to the community on September 6th 2003. It was blessed by Bishop Davies, and a celebration party was held, with hymn-

singing, dancing and feasting. At the hand-over the headman was presented with a store of materials needed for maintenance. It is expected that there will be no need for major repairs for many years, since the design was specifically geared for low maintenance, and the climate is one in which steel does not rust rapidly. There is a possibility of further bridges in the years to come.

This is truly a story of a 'giving bridge' - so much giving in so many different ways. Roger's comment at the end of the project was, "We've both been involved in such big projects in our careers, it's nice to do something small, where you get a kind of intimate relationship."

By **Helen E. Glover**

* "Umzimvubu is a newish diocese situated between the two older dioceses of Natal and St. John's. Bishop Davies is (was?) its youngish founding bishop, trained at Kelham, I think." +RM CR

Winnie The Pooh, Catholic Priest

Evil as they are, homosexual priests and apostate theologians may not be the biggest problems facing the Catholic Church. The more insidious tribulations of heterodoxy and the rejection of tradition and solemnity in the Mass have likely done as much damage. Consider the latest innovations in the modern sacrifice of the Mass: Hand puppets and TV Land lingo.

Before reading about that in detail, know that traditionalist Catholics suffer in parishes, such as the one in our town, where the Faith is a mockery of what it was. The church here built an abominable addition to accommodate growth. The old Church is a small, sturdy, stone edifice worthy of the Church Militant. The addition, to quote a quip I heard, looks little better than a Quaker Meeting House.

Beautiful statues and other Catholic art

are absent. The stained glass is sterile and modern, devoid of sacred imagery. The new addition has one holy water receptacle, a baptismal font that resembles a small jacuzzi. Laughably, it was empty during Lent, after the fashion of moron clerics who think "sacrificing" something for Lent means sacrificing the sacramentals. You wonder if they sacrificed the Rosary as well.

Of course, the parish is hip. Altar girls seem to outnumber the altar boys, and often, particularly during summer, you see bare legs under vestments. Shorts and halter tops are proper attire at Mass for the modern Catholic.

This is the physical milieu in which Mass is held, and unsurprisingly, reverence and solemnity are virtually unknown. During the consecration of the Eucharist, for instance, some people defiantly refuse to kneel.

After Mass one day, the vessels of Holy Communion were carried down the main aisle in what appeared to be a repainted shoe-shine box. The music is detestable, often Protestant. One Sunday, some loony woman was shakin', rattlin' and rollin' to a perfectly hideous recessional hymn more appropriate to a tent revival in backwater Alabama. Grabbing my sons, I fled the ecumenical attack in horror.

As for the priest, in the two years my family attended the church, we never heard a sermon on abortion, birth control, divorce, the apostles, the saints, confession, or anything important. The priest never offered a serious exegesis of the readings from Scripture. He rarely mentioned sin, and when he did, he fretted about people sinning against each other, not against God. Hell? Never heard of it. "Titanic," however, that execrable cinematic vessel of cultural poison, was just great.

Thus do we drive 30 miles to attend Mass in a parish with a real Church, real priests and real altar boys, but sometimes the drive is too much. We dread going to

Mass here, but with a family of seven, sometimes we compromise. We always regret it, and this weekend reminded us why. This church, by the way, has a new priest whom we expected to bring a new regime. He did. It's worse.

At one Mass, a typically undisciplined altar girl, wearing Sponge Bob flip-flops, assisted the priest, who delivered a unique homily. Sermonizing during the usual ballet in front of the altar, his right hand gradually emerged from under his vestments. Out came Winnie The Pooh. Hand-puppet Pooh observed that we are all God's puppets, or some such nonsense, then the priest, morphing back to his real self, finished with a few lines that bordered on pantheism.

Stay tuned for next week's sermon, he said, "same Bat time, same Bat channel."

This, fellow Catholics, is the Church.

By **R. Cort Kirkwood**

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The Diocesan Circular
The Annunciator
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