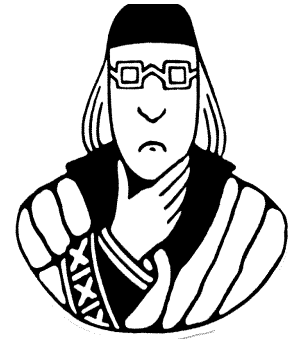


Welcome to St. Scaredycat's Catholic Community



You're new in the suburbs and it's Sunday morning, so you and your spouse drive over to the nearest Catholic church — uh, make that *community*. You walk into the modern cement structure and are accosted by a GREETER (so says the sticker stuck on his shirt), who welcomes you with a moist handshake. You proceed to a pew, genuflect, and reach down for the kneeler. No kneeler! Hmm. So you kneel on the linoleum floor, but in so doing bang your chin on the pew in front of you. Half-dazed, you just sit down.

Time to get your bearings. You look around — no statuary, no crucifix, no Stations of the Cross, no Tabernacle, no stained-glass windows. Ah, but how 'bout those felt banners with Latin sayings!

Alas, no, actually it's Pig Latin — no doubt an attempt to be relevant to the Younger Generation.

After the band is warmed up, the cantor announces from behind her conga drums that the "presider" today will be Father Bud, who, after boogying up the center aisle clapping his hands to the beat, belts out to the half-empty multi-purpose auditorium, "Hiii, evvryboddy!" And the audience yells back, "Hiii, Buuudd!"

Since the Penitential Rite is omitted, you're quickly into the Scripture readings. No Pig Latin here! Now you're into Feminese — "God our Father/Mother" and all that jive.

Then the homily. You're hungry for guidance. One of your daughters is sleeping with her boyfriend, your son is deeply into pot, and your ailing mother wants her doctor to give her a lethal injection. So, what do you hear? "We must be nonjudgmental and inclu-

sive, for God accepts everyone just as she or he is." Then an announcement: "At the donut hour after the liturgy, our Gay and Lesbian Support Group will show a video about alternative lifestyles."

Since the Creed is not recited, you're into the Eucharistic Prayer in no time, with your pew-mates standing up for their rites (or "rights"), arms outstretched like the presider's. At the Sign of Peace the band breaks into lounge music for ten minutes of chatting, laughing, and backslapping. Next on the program, says Bud, is Sister Sam. Suddenly a grizzled nun bursts out of the sacristy in purple leotards. After she prances around a bit, Bud leads a big round of applause.

Then, finally, Communion. Bud retires to his cushioned Presider's Chair (isn't that where the Tabernacle usually is?) as four women wearing plastered smiles distribute Communion. Then Bud rises and boogies out.

As you proceed to your car, *still* half-dazed, you wonder: Why is this "Catholic community" so enthralled by our tawdry culture, *so afraid to be Catholic*?

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly magazine edited by orthodox lay Catholics, are contesting those schlockmeisters in vestments across the country who want nothing more than to be hip.

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