

CATHOLIC LITURGY: Schlock & No Awe

In many Catholic parishes today, the sense of awe — of majesty and mystery — has largely been banished. The incense, sanctus bell, votive candles, and Communion rail are gone. The Tabernacle with the reserved Sacrament — having been replaced by the Presider's Chair or a bouquet of twigs — can't be found. Statues of the saints are locked in the basement, replaced by balloons, banners with greeting-card sentiments, and other dime-store decorations. The organ gathers cobwebs. And the crucifix has been taken down, replaced by a rainbow flag.

It's virtually impossible to pray before or after Mass because of all the chatter and backslapping. The Creed is left unsaid. Schlockmeister-homilists pander with feel-good bubblics and lame jokes. The words of the readings and liturgy are gender-bended (but don't you dare bend your knee for the Eucharistic Prayer!). The sanctuary has become a stage, and we must clap, clap, clap for the liturgical dancers, the clowns, the band, and Ms. Cantor with her conga drums — we aren't making a joyful noise unto the Lord, but only unto the (amateurish) entertainers.

In many parishes the primary purpose of the Mass has been transformed from receiving Christ and worshipping the Almighty into "celebrating community" — i.e., celebrating our wonderful selves. One so-called liturgical expert, the now-disgraced Archbishop Weakland, has said the Mass shouldn't convey "a feeling of infinity or eternity or the world beyond," for it's really about "communal sensitivity" among parishioners. But touchie-feelie Catholicism — where, at the

Sign of Peace, the band breaks into lounge music for ten minutes of hugging and laughing — has no power or magnetism. Not many people get out of bed on Sunday morning in search of huggies and giggles.

No wonder church attendance among Catholics has dropped by over half since the liturgical trivialities began. And today most Catholics don't believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist — which isn't surprising, given that *how* we worship has a profound effect on *what* we believe about the meaning of the Mass.

How much longer will we put up with this liturgical malpractice? We at the *NEW OXFORD REVIEW*, a monthly orthodox Catholic magazine, agree with Cardinal Ratzinger that our damaged liturgy needs to be repaired. We articulate the Catholic Faith in all its truth, light, and splendor. We don't just chronicle liturgical horror stories, we cover the *full range* of issues of concern to traditional Catholics. We give you elegant and witty prose that goes right to the heart of the matter.

We're "first-rate," says *National Review*; "splendid," says George Will; and "admirable," said Walker Percy.

The Catholic people have been robbed of their rich heritage. In this age of junk food, pederast-priests, garbage culture, and Catholicism-Lite, what the *NEW OXFORD REVIEW* stands for could be an acquired taste, like Beethoven or a turbocharged Porsche. But it's a taste the Catholic masses once understood and amorphously yearn for.

Take heart, subscribe, and see what you've been missing.

