

Does St. Bozo's Parish No Longer Amuse You?

In many Catholic parishes today, the sense of the sacred — of mystery and majesty and even of worship itself — has largely been banished. The bells, incense, votive candles, and Communion rail are gone. The Tabernacle with the reserved Sacrament can't be found. Elegant statues of our friends, the saints, are locked in the basement, replaced by balloons, banners with greeting-card sentiments, and other dime-store decorations. The organ gathers cobwebs. The sanctuary has become a stage. And the kneelers are now being ripped out, the crucifix taken down.

It's virtually impossible to pray before (or after) Mass because of all the chatter and back-slapping. The Creed is left unsaid. Homilists pander with (un-funny) jokes and (not quite the latest) pop-psychology blather. The words of the liturgy are improvised upon by politically-correct clerics and lectors with weird agendas — God our Father becomes "God our Parent," the Son of God becomes the "Child of God," etc. And we must clap, clap, clap for the band and the liturgical dancers and the clowns — we aren't making a joyful noise unto the Lord, but only unto the (amateurish) entertainers.

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 influential liturgical "expert" 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 this touchie-feelie Catholicism — where the Sign of Peace becomes the high point of the Mass — has no power or magnetism. Normal people seldom get out of bed on Sunday morning in search of warm huggies.

Catholics who are alienated by trivialized or freakish Masses — who are sick of being guinea pigs in a liturgical lab — often jump ship for an Evangelical church, or just stay in bed. Indeed, church attendance among Catholics has dropped from 70%, just before the liturgical experiments began, to 25% today! And today, two out of three 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.

The liturgical experiments have largely been a miserable failure. 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 splendor and truth. We don't just chronicle liturgical horror stories, we cover the full range of issues of concern to orthodox Catholics. According to *The Catholic Answer*, we're having "a notable impact" for the good on our deeply troubled Church. Subscribe today and take heart!

(© 1997 New Oxford Review Inc.)

