**NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2018**

Before writing this newsletter I sent the following email to our Mass coordinators:

“I am preparing the autumn schedule which will include, as usual, a newsletter,

“It occurred to me that it could be valuable for me to ask our Mass coordinators if there is anything they wish to be included in the newsletter. It might be something about our procedures, or about the performance of some (or many) of our Eucharistic ministers, or about the management of the ministry…or whatever.”

Here is a synthesis of the feedback I received:

Ministers who do not report at least 15 minutes early make the coordinator’s functioning difficult. A coordinator has to wrestle with a host of details, and dealing with ministers arriving at the last minute compounds the confusion.

Ministers who do not appear for assignments pose a special problem. They force the coordinator to go searching through the assembly for replacements and/or to revise arrangements at the last minute –even after the Mass as started. More than once I have sent a note to the altar via the gifts basket saying “Father, do not fill one ciborium” with hosts when I could not come up with a substitute while the Mass is underway.

Why do we have no-shows? I’m only guessing, but probably a variety of reasons. Some ministers may not transfer their assignment dates from the general schedule to their personal calendars. Some may forget to check their calendars. Some may simply forget the day of the week. On the other hand, there are legitimate excuses such as sudden illness when there is no time to seek a sub.

Then there is the problem of failure to help clean up after Mass, such as leaving it to the coordinator and perhaps another Eucharistic minister to collect all the vessels and linens used in Mass, haul them to the sacristy and clean and put them away. Our procedures are such that cup ministers automatically are involved in purifying, washing and putting away while the Mass is underway. This leaves it up to the bread ministers to remain after Mass to take care of the rest of items used in the Mass. Many – yes, many - simply do not.

One coordinator went so far as to characterize ministers who take all the duties seriously as “doers” and distinguished them from ministers who appear at the altar, offer Holy Communion, and then disappear. They are “takers” in this coordinator’s view.

Despite what I have just reported, I lean toward another comment I received: “Overall we have a great team, and most of the time enough volunteers show up to help. I still love being a part of it.”

It is incumbent on all to remember that our service in this ministry ultimately is service to our brothers and sisters in faith and is linked to Good Lord’s instruction: “Do this in remembrance of me.”

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Please read this quarter’s schedule carefully. You may find that you have been assigned on a one-time basis to a Mass you do not ordinarily attend. Eleven of our ministers have assignments like this. Virtually all the odd assignment are to the 5:30 Mass where we are in great need of additional ministers. Whatever you might do to help find some good candidates would highly appreciated.

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Let me use this occasion to remind everyone – and especially new Eucharistic ministers – about our system to obtain a substitute. If you need a sub, send an email message to Helen Okunak (hokunak@callecho.com) who will forward the request to the entire ministry. If you access your schedule using the Minister Scheduler Pro app, do not use its system to seek a substitute. It does not give us enough control or certainty.

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Catherine Siddique, who serves principally at the 11 a.m. Mass, sent me a thoughtful piece that reminds us about some basics of what we do and why we do it. In part it said:

“As ministers in the liturgy, the presider included, leaders in liturgical prayer must be people of prayer themselves. We cannot give to others what we do not have within ourselves. In order to give a prayerful spirit, we must have a prayerful spirit.

“Liturgical ministers, especially, but every member of the assembly also, need to remember to pray in silence throughout the week and to bring that prayerful silence to the liturgy.”

**About Hiroshima and Personal Morality**

After retiring from NASA, I returned to school for a master’s degree in theology. What inspired that was a stint in a program called Education for Parish Service. It was a mixture of learning practical things like setting up a Mass and mastering the Roman missal. It included classroom work with a session on moral theology.

That was a memorable session. Somehow the topic of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima came up. The lecturer, a priest, declared that the attack was morally wrong. That provoked an almost universal rejection by the class of his view. Needless to say most of the class members were older men and women who had vivid personal memories of World War II.

Their position is familiar history. They noted that military authorities told President Truman that if they were required to invade the Japanese mainland, upward of one million Americans would die along with an untold number of Japanese. Truman’s advisors stated that the Japanese would stand firm in defense of the homeland, and any thought of their surrender under the threat of invasion was wrong.

On the basis of this information the president authorized the atomic bombing of a Japanese city, which turned out to be Hiroshima. He believed that faced with such an awesome weapon the Japanese military would capitulate. It was a tradeoff – a hundred thousand lives versus millions – American and Japanese – lost in an invasion.

Our class was unanimous in declaring Truman’s choice justified.

Truman’s choice might be viewed as a classic example of choosing between the lesser evils – the evil of the destruction of the city and a hundred thousand or more deaths involved or the evil of millions of lives lost in an invasion.

Or perhaps it could be looked at from the standpoint of the principle of double effect. But that requires that the act be good or indifferent and that the good effect must not be caused by the evil effect. The bombing could be considered good in that it would save more than a million lives. But the good effect came at the expense of an evil, the death of hundreds of thousands.

Whatever the moral reality of President Truman’s decision, it has been debated ever since it happened 78 years ago.

The point of bringing this up here is that serious moral dilemma is not easy to resolve. What do you do when an aged loved one is suffering badly while dying? Or if you take your obligations as a citizen profoundly, how do you choose between two objectionable candidates? I’m a good Catholic, divorced, remarried and have not been through the annulment process. Can I, should I go to communion?

When marshalling the pros and cons in a decision process, it is incumbent for Catholics to learn the church’s position on the matter and to give it first place among the factors to be taken into consideration. How do you learn the church’s position? First, talk to your priest. In addition you can consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Furthermore there are tons of literature on deciding moral questions.

What if your decision does not agree with church teaching?

Father John Catoir, JCD, who headed the Christopher movement for years, posed the situation of a disastrous marriage involving abuse and violence and ultimately, divorce. Then the abused party finds true love.

“It is not difficult,” Father Catoir writes, “to see how the new relationship can be perceived as a gift from God.” Next he describes the new couple’s attempt for an annulment, but are told they have no case or they cannot prove their allegations. So they consult a priest who “may encourage them to follow their consciences if the facts seem to support their moral convictions.”

Father Catoir points out that Pope John Paul II had forbidden couples from receiving the Eucharist if they were not validly married. But “many of them receive anyway believing that their second marriage is not a sin but a blessing.”

Such a reception of Holy Communion violates the letter of the law,” Father Catoir writes, “but freedom of conscience comes into play here The natural law right to marry must be weighed against the doubt about the validity of the first marriage. Very few priests would turn anyone away from receiving the Eucharist. The burden is on the person receiving to do what they think is the right thing.”

Father Catoir then raises a question: Isn’t a Catholic bound to form his or her conscience according to the teaching the Church’s highest teaching authority, the Magisterium? Answer: Yes. “But what exactly does that mean?”

For the answer Father Catoir quotes a passage from an address by the late Cardinal Avery Dulles, the prominent Jesuit theologian. “There is no perfect identity between conscience and the magisterium of the Church. Conscience is an interior, not an outer, voice…The magisterium fulfills the aspiration of conscience by enabling it to find the moral good at which it aims…For members of the Church, the magisterium is one, but only one, information of conscience.”

Father Catoir concludes: “In other words there are times when an informed conscience is not a conformed (to magisterial teaching) conscience. The Church urges us to obey and conform, but this is not always possible. The lawmaker cannot envision every set of circumstances when writing a law…

“The Church upholds freedom of conscience to the extent that even if a person is in error, he or she must obey their conscience. Outsiders should respect the sincere and well-formed conscience of another person even if they disagree with it.”

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*From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

*Article 1799. Faced with a moral choice, conscience may make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them.*

*Article 1800. The human being must always obey the certain judgment of conscience.*

Jim McCulla