IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

2008 NPM REGIONAL CONVENTIONS

ESPECIALLY FOR CLERGY

When they met in council forty-five years ago, the very practical bishops of the Second Vatican Council knew that priests were key players in parish life both because of their sacramental role and responsibility and because of their place as parish leaders. Therefore, when they declared that “full and active participation by all the people” was the “aim to be considered before all else” in the reform and promotion of the liturgy, they also knew that “it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless, in the first place, the pastors themselves become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy and make themselves its teachers” (Sacrosanctum Concilium [SC], 14). “With zeal and patience,” the bishops said, “pastors must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful and also their active participation in the liturgy, both internally and externally” (SC, 19).

The bishops, in their wisdom (and, perhaps, because of their own experience), also knew that we tend to get comfortable with the way we currently do things—we like what we know; many of us are happy in our accustomed routines. So they challenged us to become uncomfortable, to peek over the edges of our ruts and see what else might be out there. They said: “Priests, both secular and religious, who are already working in the Lord’s vineyard are to be helped by every suitable means to understand ever more fully what it is they are doing in their liturgical functions; they are to be aided to live the liturgical life and to share it with the faithful entrusted to their care” (SC, 18).

Because NPM has recognized from its beginning the central role that priests play in the liturgical life of parishes and other communities, and because we affirmed the bishops’ practical insight that “it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing” a renewal of sung worship without the priests, we have encouraged clergy membership in NPM, the largest Catholic association dedicated to liturgical renewal in the United States, either as one half of our regular two-part membership, as individual members, or as key members of a group.

Responding to the bishops’ invitation to help priests—as well as deacons and other members of the clergy—to “be helped by every suitable means to understand ever more fully what it is they are doing in their liturgical functions,” NPM has always made sure that programs for clergy are part of its annual conventions. This year’s regional conventions are no exception.

We particularly invite clergy to attend conventions with their director of music ministries or other key musicians from their community because we also acknowledge the practical wisdom of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), which affirms that the selection and arrangement of the various options for Mass “are entrusted to the priest celebrant” (GIRM, 24) but still notes that “the selection of different parts is to be made in agreement with those who have some role in the celebration” and that “harmonious planning and carrying out of the rites will be of great
assistance in disposing the faithful to participate in the Eucharist” (GIRM, 352).

Full details about the programs and events listed here may be found in the 2008 Conventions brochure or online at http://www.npm.org/EducationEvents/convention/index.htm.

**PLENUM SESSIONS**

Plenary presentations lay the theoretical foundations for practical, pastoral application.

In **East Brunswick**, the plenum sessions that will be of particular interest to clergy participants include Sister Carol Perry’s Christological and ecclesiological session, “Christ Our Sure Foundation in the Face of Change” (Monday); Father Anthony Ruff’s presentation of “The Liturgical Changes We Face” (Tuesday); Sister Donna L. Cyanio’s sociological and cultural analysis of “The Changing Face of the Church in the United States” (Wednesday); and Dr. Jerry Galipeau’s ministerial analysis of the same phenomena: “The Changing Face of Ministry in the Church” (Thursday).

In **Cleveland**, the plenum sessions will focus on several aspects of ministry in a changing Church that worships with a changing liturgy. Dr. Doris Donnelly will look at the need for a “collaborative heart” to minister in this situation (Tuesday); Mr. Christopher Walker will attend to the need for personal spirituality among the Church’s leaders (Wednesday); Sr. Mary Bendyna will point out the cultural and sociological changes in the Church that we serve (Thursday); and Msgr. Ray East will look at the support we can build as we negotiate these changes together (Friday).

The plenum sessions in **Los Angeles** will explore facets of the mystery of the Eucharist, beginning with a theological updating by Msgr. Kevin Irwin (Tuesday). That mystery unfolds in a diverse and multicultural Church (Wednesday, Mr. Rawn Harbor), and it requires poetic and poetic leadership (Thursday, Dr. Robert McCarty). This mystery that we affirm, embrace, and celebrate is the mystery of divine love, and “the love of Christ compels us” to work at transforming the world into “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 17). This is the invitation that sends us forth (Friday, Sr. Cynthia Serjak).

**FOR CLERGY: EAST BRUNSWICK**

Workshop sessions designed for clergy participants at the Eastern Regional Convention (June 30–July 3) include two sessions led by Very Rev. Thomas M. Dragga, president-rector of Cleveland’s Borromeo Seminary: “Presiding with New Texts” (A 11) and “Preaching the Same Christ in the Face of Change” (B 11). Other sessions of interest include “Working Together As One” (A 02); “The New Missal: What Will It Mean?” (A 06); “What Theology Are New Documents Praying?” (A 07); “Models of Multicultural Worship” (A 09); “Managing Time, People, and Relationships” (B 02); “What Theology Are We Singing?” (B 06); and “New U.S. Music Documents” (D 06).

**FOR CLERGY: CLEVELAND**

Workshops for clergy at the Central Regional Convention (July 8–11) focus on several roles of the priest: as singing presider (A 11), as preacher of Christ (B 11), and as prayer leader (C 11). Other sessions that clergy participants will find interesting include “Tradition, Age, and Culture” (A 05); “Changes in Culture, Liturgy, and Style Require Listening” (A 08); “New Texts: The Order of Mass and the Hymns We Sing” (B 05); “Working with Hispanic Musicians” (B 08); “What Do New Documents Require?” (C 05); “Hearing and Enculturating Church Documents” (C 08); “Using the Resources Our Youth Bring” (C 09); “We Are What We Pray” (D 05); and “Caring for the Self to Care for the Community” (D 06).

**FOR CLERGY: LOS ANGELES**

The Western Regional Convention (August 5–8) offers clergy an opportunity to examine the new liturgical texts: How do we preside with them (A 11) and preach from them (B 01), and what theology do they reveal (B 11)? Another session focuses on collaboration skills (C 11). Additional interesting workshops include “Integrating Cultural Traditions and Community Worship” (A 01); “Liturgy Forms the Whole Person and the Whole Parish” (A 04); Celebrating Asian devotions (A 08a) and Hispanic (A 08b) or African American (A 08c) wedding traditions; “The Challenge or Opportunity of New Texts for the Mass” (B 04); celebrating Lunar New Year (B 08a) and Hispanic (B 08b) or African American (B 08c) wake and funeral traditions; “Explore How Eucharist and Culture Interact” (C 01); “Rooted in Sunday: The Many Ways a
Parish Prays” (C 04); and Hispanic (C 08b) and African American (C 08c) Marian devotions and the liturgy.

**Jubilate Deo**

This year, NPM presents its *Jubilate Deo* award posthumously to the priest-composer Clarence Rivers. Clarence Rufus Joseph Rivers was born in Selma, Alabama, on September 9, 1931, but his family moved to Cincinnati when he was very young. His family wasn’t Catholic, but they enrolled their son in Catholic school, where he grew to love the church and its liturgy and traditions. His parents consented when he asked to be baptized (eventually the whole family became Catholic). In 1956 he became the first African American priest ordained for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. He taught high school English and served as an associate pastor, later completing graduate studies in English, theater, and liturgy. He earned a doctorate in liturgy and culture at the Union Institute and University (then the Union Graduate School), headquartered in Cincinnati, in 1978.

While teaching and working in parishes in the years before the Second Vatican Council, Father Rivers began composing original songs in English: His *American Mass Program* was released as an LP record in 1963. When the first Mass in English was celebrated at the North American Liturgy Week in St. Louis in 1964, Father Rivers led the congregation in his composition “God Is Love” as the song for the Communion procession. He went on to compose Mass settings, hymns, songs, litanies, and acclamations. He wrote two books on African American worship—*Soulfull Worship* and *The Spirit in Worship*—as well as numerous articles, and he spoke at many conferences, including the Institute in Black Music, Culture, and History at NPM’s 1983 National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

Rivers was the founding director of the Department of Culture and Worship in the National Office of Black Catholics and the editor of its journal, *Freeing the Spirit*. He founded his own firm, Stimuli, Inc., to produce his compositions and publications and as a base for workshops on effective liturgy. At the time of his unexpected death, on the Solemnity of Christ the King (November 21), 2004, he was working on a project to re-record all his music and to compile the scores in one volume. He was also developing a proposal for an institute to train professional liturgists in the art of worship.

**Also of Interest**

**Multicultural Institute.** The 2008 Multicultural Institute, offered as part of the Western Regional Convention, will explore diversity, culture, devotions, and liturgy as well as what needs to be considered when planning multicultural worship. The program will be led by The Rev. Eric Law, an Episcopal priest who is an internationally known professional consultant in the areas of multicultural leadership and organizational development, and Ms. Mary Frances Reza, a member of the Executive Board of the Institute of Hispanic Liturgy, who has served in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a pastoral musician, liturgist, teacher, composer, clinician, and director of the Office of Worship and Liturgical Music and is currently a consultant for the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission. The institute begins on Monday, August 4, at 5:00 pm, and other sessions take place during the breakout periods of the convention. Full information is available in the 2008 Convention brochure.

**Liturgical Space Tour.** Looking to renovate or rebuild? Looking for ideas about arrangements for worship? Then be sure to join one of the pre-convention liturgical space tours. The tour in New Jersey (Monday, June 30) will visit four relatively new churches, each of which uses parts of previous buildings or elements based on older architectural styles. In Ohio, the tour (Tuesday, July 8) will visit three churches—an 1859 structure renovated for maximum flexibility, the home church of the Benedictine monks in Cleveland, and a recently dedicated church (2004) with award-winning artwork. The California tour (Tuesday, August 5) will visit one of the historic Spanish missions, a church that has shifted its axis (without the help of an earthquake!), and a recently constructed facility with an inviting gathering space, excellent sight lines, and attention to room for processions. *Also in Los Angeles:* The Monday evening choral concert will take place at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, with tours preceding the concert.

**Clergy-Musician Duo Discount**

Clergy members and musicians who have an NPM parish membership and register for the convention
together receive a discounted rate: $230 each (a savings of $25 each off the advance members’ rate). This discount is available to only one member of the clergy and one musician from the same member parish or institution—advance registration only. Both registration forms and full payment must be included together in the same envelope and must be postmarked on or before the advance registration deadline for the appropriate convention (May 30 for East Brunswick, June 6 for Cleveland, and July 7 for Los Angeles). Sorry, this discount is not available online.

**Brothers and Sisters Under Attack**

As we begin our Lenten journey to Easter, we should keep in prayer those Christian communities that have not known peace or tranquility recently. In India’s Orissa state, just before Christmas, battles between Hindus and Christians led to the destruction of five Catholic churches, forty-eight village chapels, two seminaries, six hostels, and four convents; and hundreds of homes (mostly Christian, several dozen Hindu) were burned and looted. In the first few days of January, six Christian churches and three other church-run institutions in Iraq were damaged by bomb attacks.