



LET'S GIVE JOHNNY A BIG HAND

A young man about eighteen years old came by my office to talk. He expressed to me a deep emptiness in his heart. He said, "I hurt inside," as he put both hands against his chest. My heart went out at once to this young man, who was experiencing tremendous pain.

The first thing I asked him was if he went to church. His response was "No".

"To what religion do you belong?" I asked.

"Catholic," he responded.

"Have you been confirmed?"

"Yes, about four months ago."

"Had you been going to church prior to confirmation?" "No."

"Did you go to confession before you made your confirmation?" "No."

"Did you receive Holy Communion at your confirmation?" "Yes."

"Did they clap for you and the other candidates?" "Yes."

"Have you gone to church since your confirmation?" "No."

It is insanity to clap for youth who make a profession of faith which they have no understanding of or belief in. Apparently there is no limit to the foolishness incorporated into what once was the Church's solemn and dignified liturgical celebration.

As I completed this last line the phone rang, so I stopped typing and answered it. One of my sons wanted some information on sterilization. He had been in a conversation with one of his company supervisors (a Catholic), who was relating to him the fact that one of his employees (also Catholic), had taken off work to have a vasectomy. The supervisor was relating the incident with no apparent indication that the man was doing anything wrong. My son informed him that it was a serious sin to have this procedure done. Now listen to this carefully, ***HIS SUPERVISOR DID NOT KNOW THAT THIS WAS A SINFUL ACT.***

(Question) Do we have a problem when a twenty-three year old has to inform a practicing Catholic about something as important as sterilization?

Both of these instances, I believe, could cause reasonable people to wonder, "Where are the teachers?" Where are the shepherds? What must be understood here is, whether it is the authority in the home, the husband; the authority in the parish, the priest; or the authority in the diocese, the bishop; when those in authority become silly and childish in their thinking, they will diminish the seriousness of many of life's basic tenants. When this happens, all hell breaks loose. And as far as I am concerned, I truly believe that this is exactly what has happened. That is, we have confused seriousness with silliness.

Serious matters are compromised or passed over when church leaders lose their direction. This is what this little pamphlet is really all about, i.e., the direction in which we are heading. Clapping is only one small indication of this.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH CLAPPING

One might honestly ask, "What is wrong with clapping?" The response would be, "Absolutely nothing." It is not the clapping that is the problem, it is the inappropriate use, and/or abuse of clapping that is the problem. Is eating, drinking, sports, sex, or even relaxing wrong? Of course not. Yet all can be abused, and can cause untold suffering and heartache in the family.

Several years ago, I read an article that addressed the liturgy and its goal. The author stated that it is important to keep in mind, that no matter what is introduced into the liturgy, it should not call attention to itself, but rather direct the faithful to a greater appreciation and understanding of Christ and His holy sacrifice. Christ is really what liturgy is ultimately all about.

Now as I see it, this means the choir is to sing beautiful songs to bring our emotions up to the level of the awesome and supernatural happenings that are taking place on the altar, and not to draw attention to itself. When someone asks you to clap for the choir, or for anyone else for that matter, they are directing attention away from what the liturgy is all about, namely Christ.

I have seen a priest lead the applause for a basketball team who had attended Mass before their game. The kids were dressed in their shorts; you always dress for the most important occasion. And basketball (the second person of the new trinity), in their minds, was the most important thing here. You know what I mean by the new trinity. That is god the football, god the basketball and god the baseball. (It might be noted that the person getting the vasectomy whom my son called about is from this priest's parish.) Silliness rushes in when things of substance are not understood and taught.

One might legitimately respond, you are attacking kids and their coach who are doing some-thing good, that being, attending Mass during the week. This should be praised, not criticized. This would be a correct assumption if these kids attended Mass on Sundays, but most do not.

No, the reason they were there, I believe, is that the coach wanted to win that game and did not want to take any chances. So he brought them to Mass in the hope that God might give them a little help in the game. He could have had a rabbit's foot in his pocket also. I firmly believe that God should be brought into all aspects of our lives, and that includes sports and recre-

ation. The point that I am trying to make here is that religion can be used in a superstitious and undignified manner; maturity and wisdom are essential to know the difference.

As far as my research on clapping in church in America goes, it seems that it was practically nonexistent until sometime after the Vatican II Council. Now this is something that needs to be seriously considered. Clapping became popular in this country and continued to grow in popularity at about the same time as the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist started its rapid decline. Mass attendance also started plummeting. Mass attendance was somewhere in the 70% bracket at the time of the Council. Now it is down to somewhere in the 20% to 29% range depending on which poll you quote. Regardless of which statistic one uses, the facts are horrifying, and yet our shepherds as a whole seem unconcerned.

If this unbelievable drop in Mass attendance by Catholics in the U.S. has not shocked you, then may-be the fact that of the remaining few who still do attend Mass regularly, only 30% of these believe that the Eucharist is truly the Body of Christ.

WHO SEES THE PROBLEM

When the survey came out showing that only 30% of Catholics believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Catholic community was not disturbed to any degree.

This concerned me, because most Catholics seemed to have a ho-hum, don't be so negative attitude. I thought, why were so many Catholics undisturbed by such horrifying news? Well, after much time and reflecting along with many contacts with bishops, priests and laity, I realized that I had not really understood what the 30% statistic meant. It meant that 70% of the people could not be disturbed, for they are the ones who do not believe in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist. Let me repeat that. They were not disturbed because they are the ones who do not believe in the true presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist.

It must also be kept in mind that of the 30% who claim to believe, the level goes from a fervent understanding (that understanding likened to the saints) to a purely (I remembered my catechism) understanding. The stronger the understanding of Christ's true presence in the Eucharist the more one sees the problem with introducing traditionally secular novelties (like clapping) into the churches.

It would be interesting to know how many priests and bishops still believe in the Real Presence. You might gasp! Are you trying to say that some of our priests and bishops don't believe in our Lord's True Presence? No, my friend, I am not *trying* to say that, I am saying it. ***Some do not believe.***

Clapping in church is only one indication, and a small one at that, of their lack of belief. There are many and more serious manifestations of this loss of belief.

For those who doubt my accusations about some priests and bishops, I have a video of a monsignor, the vicar of a diocese, saying, "We are the body of Christ." Then pointing to the altar saying, "Not that bread." This was done not in private but before a packed church with about twenty-five priests along with their bishop present. The monsignor received a standing ovation. ***Boy, did they clap.***

When one sees nothing wrong with clapping, it is the beginning of blindness to the more serious errors in the Church.

The prevailing attitude is don't be a fault finder. Just smile, and be tolerant. God loves all His children. It is this attitude which is behind the clapping, that really scares me. I truly believe that we have lost our minds as well as our faith. The point I want to make here is, if the vast majority of Catholics do not believe that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, why should they be concerned about clapping, or for that matter why should they be concerned about anything else done in the church? To them it is nothing more than an auditorium. So what's all the fuss about?

Anyone, who believes that I might be telling a falsehood about this incident concerning the mon-signor, may order a video of that Mass. You see, they were so proud of it; they even videotaped it. Daring aren't they? I admire their guts; they are not afraid. I just wished more of our faithful priests and bishops had their courage. For some reason the faithful Catholics have less fire and zeal than do the dissenters. Some of the more faithful Catholics seem to be ashamed to speak out for sound teachings and practices. They seem to fear the telling of the truth, and that is why we have the appalling number of people who have lost their faith.

Again, clapping in church is just one sign that the church has become just another auditorium and no longer the house of God. As with many other novelties that have been introduced into the Church in recent years, clapping has been presented as a positive and wholesome change for the better and, at the same time, we are told that it has been done thorough the ages.

Silly boy, don't you know church history? Don't you know that it is even done in Rome?

The answer I like to give to these intellectuals is to check the percentages of church goers in the great city of Rome. One statistic I received was about 19% Mass attendance. Rome is a tourist center. It is very hard to keep things sacred when millions of people are passing through the churches each year.

The next time you hear one of those intellectuals using Rome or history to justify this silly practice, just ask them what type of people were promoting the clapping. Was it the saintly or the worldly ones? Allow me to give you an example.

Pope Pius X had just been elected pope and was entering St. Peter's when all started to applaud. Turning to Archbishop Merry del Val the Pope said: "They should not do this to the servant in the house of the Master". The next morning before the coronation, slips of paper were passed out which read: "It is the deep wish of His Holiness that in the basilica there be no applause and that a reverent silence be observed."

Keep in mind that Pope Pius X is now a canon-ized saint. Now ***you*** make the choice, whose directives you will follow? I, for my part, find that following the directives of the saints are much more fruitful than following those that have contributed to the emptying of our churches through what many serious minded adults would consider silliness.

I checked with some priests and it seems that clapping started in the churches in America sometimes after the Second Vatican Council. A priest friend of mine told me he was ordained in 1960, and there was no clapping at his ordination.

What must be kept in mind is that this foolish-ness is in no way a matter of doctrine; it is strictly a matter of common sense. But when common sense is lost in the everyday practice of the Catholic faith, the doctrines of our faith can and will begin to be misunderstood. The huge number of Catholics that have left the Church is a glaring illustration of this.

What is happening in the Church is the same as what is happening in the home. Foolish men have lost their understanding of the seriousness of life and are reluctant to abandon their juvenility for a manly maturity. In the case of the husband in the home, it is usually his wife on whom he inflicts his foolish logic, then he leaves as quickly as possible to avoid her scrutiny. His line goes something like this: It doesn't do any good trying to reason with her, or she just doesn't understand so why argue the point? In his mind he always labels those who disagree with him as ridiculous, and convinces himself that it is not worth his time to argue with a (crazy) woman. Then they wonder why their wives are in such a bad mood. These guys then pick up their "toy" of choice (fishing poles, golf clubs, or what ever) and quickly leave the house to separate themselves from further confrontation.

This is the same thing that is happening in the Church. Try to get one of these intellectuals to sit down and tell you how clapping in the house of God will make people better Catholics. They will not with me. Of course, I insist on having the conversation taped so as to allow many people to benefit from the discussion. Tape recorders seem to intimidate these intellectual giants. I wonder why? Could it be possible that deep down inside they know that their reasoning might sound silly on tape?

I do believe that there are those who are sincere and yet try to justify clapping because of peer pressure. They feel that since so many are doing it, they might look unloving or unappreciative if they do not promote clapping also. So they put logic aside and go along with the crowd.

CONSIDERATION

Christian Family Outreach is well aware that people of good intent can disagree on matters of discipline such as clapping in church. We are open to those who would think differently than we do on this subject. Being fair minded and eager to have a balanced view of this particular topic, we at C. F. O. offer to any bishop, priest or theologian, the opportunity to have a taped debate on this subject. We will then make this taped debate available, free of charge, to the public. This will allow the faithful the opportunity to hear the views of both sides.

We are of the opinion that no one could logically show how the clapping in churches can bring about the enhancing of a person's belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, or in any way instill in the faithful a reverence for the house of God.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George G. Gil is the author of two books, the co-founder of both C.F.O. and St. Francis Academy, a Catholic home school organization. He retired from a oil field service Co. at the age of 42. His oldest child was a senior in high school at the time and the oldest of eleven children. They had a total of seventeen pregnancies but six ended in miscarriages. George has only a *high school education*.

For many years he has counseled people in finance, family and the application of the Catholic faith in everyday life. He warns that the proper handling of money is essential if the mother is to stay home with her children. He is convinced that our big problem is the lack of a common sense application of the faith in family matters. When parents do not understand human behavior, they end up with much the same problems in their home as we are experiencing in the church.

God punishes irreverences committed in his sanctuary with a weakening of faith and a withdrawal of graces of devotion.

(St. Peter Julian Eymard)

It is the deep wish of His Holiness that in the basilica there be no applause and that a reverent silence be observed.

They should not do this (clap) to the servant in the house of the Master.

(Pius X, 1903)