actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.

14. Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (I Pet 2:9 cf. 2:4–5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

26. Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the “sacrament of unity”. . . .

30. To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes, and at the proper time all should observe a reverent silence. 12

The Present and the Future

How about the present? What does one find today upon entering a service-in-progress in St. Patrick’s or Mooney Creek or Notre Dame de Paris?

It really depends—on all sorts of variables. Perhaps the most obvious and the most important would be the theological and interpersonal stance of the celebrant, and his interest and skill as a communicator. Is he aware of the outreach necessary to effect man–man and not only man–God, God–man recognition? And can he carry it out? The size of the congregation and the size and shape of the church and the seating arrangements therein are also factors. So too is the background of the worshippers. Are they aware of the community they are, or could be, before, during and after the worship service?

The above variables will affect the degree of aware participation in public worship in general. Yet, in the specifically Roman Catholic context, rather radical community-oriented changes have been mandated and have taken place. The celebrant (notice the word!) is sometimes at his chair, witnessing or directing the participation of others in their respective roles in the liturgy, sometimes at an altar facing the people, much closer than previously. The spoken or sung words are now in the language of the people. All sorts of opportunities are afforded and invitations issued to join in, extemporaneously or in fixed response. Among these are: the Kiss of Peace, the Prayer of the Faithful, the processions, the sharing of the Cup, dialogue in the homily, meaningful silence, more frequent standing instead of the more private kneeling posture.

These changes are based on the realization that liturgy is by definition a public act, the worship of the community. Those who participate, lay and ordained, say and pray “we,” not “I.” Ideally, they are aware of the implications of the “we” pray, the “we” believe, the “we” adore. I am not