CATHOLIC WATERSHED

The Chicago Ordination Class of 1969 and How They Helped Change the Church

Michael P. Cahill

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FOREWORD

The titles of two other fine books on American Catholicism signal situations of the Church that frame the story in this book. The first, by Steven M. Avella, deals with Chicago: *This Confident Church: Catholic Leadership and Life in Chicago, 1940-1965* (Simon and Schuster, 2004). The second, equally to the point, is Peter Steinfels' *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* (Notre Dame, 1993), which focuses on the turn-of-the-millennium decades. What happened between 1965 and 2003 to prompt talk of "confidence" followed so soon by "drift"?

Michael P. Cahill, aware of the big American Catholic picture, sensibly chooses to provide a close-up on the formation, career, and retirement of a generation of priests in a particular archdiocese. Through the eyes of six well-chosen representatives of the ordination class of 1969 in Chicago, men with whom he spent considerable amounts of time and to whom he brought a ready ear and a faithful recorder, Cahill provides a window on the larger Catholic scene at a time of drastic change. This priestly generation was graced or doomed (or both) to live through the transitions of that period, to be buffeted by changes which occurred largely beyond their control, and to take measured control where they were called and assigned to serve, chiefly in parishes.

"Change" is the key term in this account of what happened to these six men, whose world-and-church we get to know quite well. They entered the priesthood eager to participate in changes promised by the Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965) and by cultural circumstances that occurred during their formative years. All of them have recently completed or are finishing up their active ministry, with the eagerness of their younger years at times dulled in the era of "drift"

after the "confidence" came to be in shorter supply. As I read the many references to changes that Cahill chronicles so accurately and vividly, I thought of an observation by Richard Hooker, an Anglican divine in an earlier age: "All change is inconveniencing, including change from worse to better."

The book may at first be unsatisfying to one cohort of potential readers, leftover "triumphalists" who yearn for a nostalgic visit back to the simpler days of confident church life under authoritarian leaders who served or were being served by vast numbers of laity who took orders (and yet, I hasten to add, also often experienced grace and community). The Catholic laity were never mere Mass-attending serfs but full-bodied groups of people whose church life readers can appraise through the eyes of the class of 1969. Latter-day triumphalists no longer trumpet victories, but many of them have now regathered and are taking refuge in reactionary circles to celebrate recalled liturgies and reined-in laity. Cahill, recounting how post-Vatican II reforms were in the air in 1969, speaks of the latter-day "reform of the reform" that now attracts some priests—but none of the six we are tracking on the pages that follow.

The members of the class of 1969 whom we meet here are faithful to the Council, but they cannot be starry-eyed. They may be moved by Christian hope, but not by standard-brand optimism. The book reveals them to be sad when their efforts are discounted but mature and faithful when their multi-faceted careers allow them to reflect the light of the Gospel, even when the general culture and much church-culture does not share that light.

This foreword is about them and author Cahill, and not about me, a mere foreworder. So I'll climb on stage for only a moment and then head for the wings. On my daily walks I often pass what had been the little Gothic gem that was for so many years Quigley Preparatory Seminary High School, where members of this class in the late 1950s and early 1960s were surrounded by an astounding 1,300-some fellow teenage aspirants to the priesthood (see Chapter Two). They were highly visible in downtown Chicago in the days of the "Confident Church," but the students are now long gone, replaced by archdiocesan staffers in what is now the archdiocesan chancery offices.

Back then Quigley seemed remote and forbidding to Lutherans like me and fellow citizens of many faiths or none. Today, though we see quite literally thousands of citizens on our walks near or past the chancery and then Holy Name Cathedral, we see no cassocks, no habits of religious sisters, no Catholic insignia. (Be advised or forewarned, however: There may soon be some cassocked young priests who have reverted to clerical uniforms as part of their "reform of the reform.")

What went wrong to produce the post-confident and now-apparently-adrift Catholic Church (at least pending the intervention of the new Pope Francis)? The answer is not simple, and Cahill chooses to provide the reader with data and stories that can inspire a variety of partial answers to such questions. He devotes particular attention to three Cardinal Archbishops (Cody, Bernardin, and George), who were or are—at least in the eyes of these six veteran priests—in one case bad, in one case good, and in one case still receiving mixed marks. The author pays attention to and rewards with compliments many effective priests and laypeople. It is refreshing to me that he is not moved by ideology or an impulse further to polarize a divided Church. I know of no higher compliment to pay to a book like this one than to say that it provides a dispassionate, close-up, intimate, patient, and often revealing picture of part of the Church in action—in, yes, a time of change. Get acquainted now with members of the ordination class of 1969, as I did, and I am confident that you will be as rewarded as I have been.

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INTRODUCTION

As teenagers making the decision to enter the high school seminary for the Church of Chicago in the late 1950s, Mike Ahlstrom, Larry Duris, Bob Heidenreich, Tom Libera, Ed Upton, and Bill Zavaski had no idea what lay in store for them. In a few short years, the hierarchically ordered, stable, rule-bound institution that had ready answers for everything would undergo a radical transformation. This sea change in the life of the Church would define their life and ministry. To a man, they embraced the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council and implemented it across the archdiocese. Although at times troubled by the reaction against their ministry that they have had to endure mostly in the later years of their priesthoods, these priests cherish the lives they have led. Considering themselves blessed to have lived in interesting, not to say revolutionary, times in the life of the Church, they have chosen to tell the real stories of their remarkable adventures as Chicago—and American—priests in the pages that follow.

These six men were ordained as Roman Catholic priests for the Archdiocese of Chicago as part of the class of 1969. They have lived in three distinct periods of American Catholic history. Born in the midst of World War II just prior to the baby boom generation, they grew up in the pre-Vatican II Church, where they learned that the Church and its teachings and practices did not change. Then, in the middle of their seminary careers, the Second Vatican Council turned upside down their previous experience of an unchanging Church. To be sure, Vatican II did not penetrate all corners of the Church simultaneously, as these men's early experiences at Chicago's major seminary would demonstrate, but even hidebound seminary life changed drastically over time because of the Council. Launched into priesthood just after Vatican II, these men attempted to live out the spirit of that Coun-

cil as Catholic priests on the front lines of Church life—that is to say, in parishes. Some twenty-plus years into their priestly ministry, their theology and pastoral practice came under increasing scrutiny in what became the third major period of their priesthood, not so much from people in the pews as from an increasingly conservative Church hierarchy in both the United States and Rome, and from a new generation of seminarians and priests. As background, then, a review of their three eras will put the story of these six priests in some context.

The Catholic Church of the grandparents and parents of the class of 1969 differed in some important respects from the Church the men themselves grew up in. Most of their grandparents arrived here from distant shores—Ireland, Poland, Lithuania—to discover an immigrant Church that often found itself on the defensive as its people attempted to assimilate into the American way of life while at the same time maintaining old world traditions. Often the victim of anti-Catholic prejudice, the Church—really, the parish—served as the most important institution in the lives of many in this generation born just before the turn of the century and living in Catholic ghettos. Priests, usually the most educated people in the parish, lived as men set apart, ruling their parishes with an iron hand, exhorting their people to "pray, pay, and obey" without question. Most parishioners accepted these strictures without complaint, both because their poor or working-class families needed discipline and authority to guide them and because the Church gave them so much. It provided identity in an often hostile world. It acted as not only the religious but the social center of their lives. It kept them focused on the "straight and narrow" as regards the many temptations of urban immigrant life: alcohol, lust, and greed. It offered spiritual consolation for difficult lives but also support to ease the tensions of social mobility. It served as a bridge between the old world and the new even as its magnificent churches provided a sense of beauty, mystery, peace, and dignity. In a world where the only constant was change, the Church alone offered continuity with the past and with timeless religious truths.

One generation later, the parents of these six men were raising their children in a Church that in many ways had changed from that of their parents, but in its essentials had not. The Church continued to be formalistic, separatist, and ethnically grounded, but it slowly be-

came less an immigrant and more an American Church. Two of the six priests under consideration here had immigrant parents, but four had parents born in the United States. The Church of the 1930s through 1950s went from being defensive to one on the offense, growing in confidence in its efforts to convince White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) America that one could be fully American and fully Catholic. Pastors built Catholic schools across the country that featured the inscription "For God and Country" over the front doors. Women religious, universally called "the good nuns," taught children both an unquestioning loyalty to the Church and patriotism for the country. Brick and mortar bishops organized and centralized Catholic life by building a Catholic infrastructure of hospitals, universities, seminaries, cemeteries, and social service agencies that paralleled and rivaled those built by public and other private institutions. After World War II, the GI Bill helped to send thousands of young Catholics to college on the way to joining the ranks of the middle class. Church movements that anticipated the Second Vatican Council made their way into Catholic life, taking shape in groups such as the Christian Family Movement, the Catholic Interracial Council, and the Catholic Youth Organization.

For most Catholics, however, the Church in the era in which these six priests grew up remained more similar to than different from that of their grandparents. It was still a rule-bound, top-down institution where Father ran the parish, Sister or Brother ran the school, and Church teaching clearly delineated right from wrong. Most Catholics still lived their lives enveloped by the ethos of the parish, obediently attending Mass, receiving the sacraments, following Catholic ratings regarding which movies to attend, and avoiding much contact with non-Catholics, except perhaps at work. The Church taught them—through its priests, sisters, and brothers—not only that Church teaching and practice did not change but that it in fact could not change.

With the advent of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, the belief in an unchanging Church quickly crumbled. It was in this era of Vatican II, a time of radical change in the country but also in the Church, that these six priests completed their seminary training and spent the first quarter century of their priesthood ministering to the Church of Chicago. No one has done a better job of articulating the major events

and issues that defined the changing American Church of the 1960s than Mark Massa, SJ, in his insightful history, *The American Catholic Revolution: How the '60s Changed the Church Forever*.[1] Massa described national events that transformed Church thinking and practice as regards liturgy, moral theology, authority and obedience, and social justice, to name a few. Massa brilliantly explained how a Church that seemingly would not and could not change did exactly that. At the Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) led to a transformation of the Mass. The priest turned and faced the people; he and the people prayed the Mass in the vernacular; the priest gave a homily—a reflection on the scriptures of the day—rather than a sermon; the whole congregation took part in the prayers and music; and, eventually, laypersons entered into the "full, conscious, and active participation" called for by the Council by proclaiming the scriptures and distributing Communion at Mass.

In 1968, just three years after the closing of the Council, during a time when more and more Catholics in America and elsewhere had begun to question the reasons for Church teaching particularly as regards morality and sexuality, Pope Paul VI promulgated *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed the Church's opposition to artificial birth control. The Pope made the decision despite the opposite recommendation of an international committee his predecessor had convened to study the issue. Many Catholics, from moral theologians to married couples struggling with the size of their families, questioned the teaching, both for its content, which seemed implausible, and because Paul VI had overridden the committee. Catholics, meanwhile, long accustomed to performing works of charity and mercy, heard from Jesuit Fathers Daniel and Philip Berrigan and their *confreres* of the Catonsville Nine, who had gone so far as to burn draft records in their protest of the Vietnam War, that becoming fully Catholic and fully American was not enough if it meant one could not live out Gospel values in the pursuit of social justice.

During this Vatican II era of the American Church, the six priests from the class of 1969—like their colleagues throughout the country—worked to transform parish liturgies, increase lay involvement in

ministry, engage in honest dialogue with parishioners about difficult aspects of Church teaching, and advance the work of social justice. To be sure, naysayers existed who criticized the changes in the Church, but they were in a distinct minority in the parishes where these men served (perhaps partly due to the priests' leadership). Just as important, the leadership of the American Church supported the efforts of men such as those from the class of '69.

Nothing symbolized the ascendancy of the Vatican II era of the American Church for that class more than the years they spent under the leadership of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, not only because of his supportive pastoral style in running the Chicago archdiocese but because of his national leadership among the U.S. bishops. Under Bernardin, these priests continued, as Larry Duris puts it, to "ride the wave" of Vatican II.

During the latter years of Bernardin's tenure, however, a strong counter-movement had begun to gain strength: the "reform of the reform," as some called it. By the early '90s, Pope John Paul II had served as Pope for almost 15 years. Over this stretch, he appointed bishops who often cast a more critical eye on the style of ministry personified by the work of priests such as those from the class of '69. Priests had become, in the eyes of critics, too close to the people and in their efforts to dialogue with the world had lost the objectivity necessary to teach, govern, and to confront sin. Vatican II-era Catholics—and their priests—had become too enamored of and too enmeshed with the culture, it was charged, and this hindered their ability to proclaim Christ as Lord to that culture. The roles of priest and laity, the argument goes, had become confused and an appalling informality had crept into liturgical celebrations.

Under Pope Benedict XVI, criticism of the implementation of the Council era became more explicit, especially in the area of liturgy. For example, a new translation of the Roman Missal recently brought in a literal translation of the Latin prayers to replace language that had been crafted to be understandable to people in the pews. While some pronounced the new language majestic and beautiful, many others—both priests and lay Catholics—found it unintelligible. In the Vatican,

Benedict sometimes celebrated Mass with his back to the people, facing the altar, and allowed a return to the use of the Latin rite (but only as the extraordinary, not the ordinary, language of the Mass).

Finally, the clerical sexual abuse scandal surfaced, precipitating even more criticism of priests, this time from the right, the left, and those in between.

The last 20-plus years of their priesthoods, then, caused these men to turn more deeply toward friendship and prayer in order to cope with both the criticism they faced and the disagreements they had with Church traditionalists as they continued to minister to the people of their parishes.

Here is their story.

Michael Cahill
Chicago, Illinois

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1. Mark S. Massa, SJ, *The American Catholic Revolution: How the '60s Changed the Church Forever* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

PROLOGUE
Ordination Day

On Wednesday May 14, 1969, at nine o'clock in the morning, 35 young men processed up the center aisle of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. The choir and people who gathered 600 strong in the packed chapel sang out the entrance song with full voice:

God of our Fathers, God everliving;
Our faith unites us, we are your people.
Come, all creation, make this day holy;
Worship earth's master, we are his people.
Thanks must be given to God Almighty;
He is our shepherd, we are his people.
God lives within us, unworthy sinners,
Praise his great mercy; we are his people.
Lord of the harvests, Light of the nations,
Life-giving Spirit, we are your people.[1]

The lyrics of the song, consciously chosen by members of the ordination class of 1969, spoke much about the spirit, theology, and pastoral mind-set of this group of seminarians preparing for the biggest moment of their young lives: their ordination to the priesthood of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The phrases "God lives within us," "Praise his great mercy," and "Light of the nations" reflected their belief in a present, forgiving, and guiding God. The repeated phrase, "we are your people," pointed to the focus of their ministry—the people of God—and their stance that "we" meant priest and people together.

The class of 1969 made this point explicitly in their ordination Mass booklet: "The words we will hear in this ceremony are quite clear in saying it is we, the people of God, who propose these candidates to the Archbishop…so that from now on they may be his fellow workers in serving the people of God."[2]

While the words of the entrance song and ordination booklet expressed the hopes and ideals of the class for "serving the people of God," the realities of both the universal and local Church looked quite different from those lofty ideals. Headlines appearing between April 10 and May 16 in the *New World*, the Catholic newspaper of the Archdiocese of Chicago, indicated some of the tensions these new priests would encounter at the universal level, especially in regard to the Church's teachings about sexuality:

- Pope Accuses Dissident Catholics of "Crucifying" the Church
- U.S. Bishops Urged to Face Challenge of Authority
- Celibacy Changes Desired Say Polled Clerics
- British Theologian Argues for Pill
- Brooklyn Priests Consider Themselves Free to Marry
- Priests Asked to Help Pick New Bishops
- Revised Ordinary of Mass Offers Variety: Ends Rigid Uniformity[3]

Such news stories testified not only to a Church changing rapidly in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope John XXIII had convened from 1962 to 1965, but also to the contentiousness touched off by the Council. Locally, too, John Cody's appointment as archbishop of Chicago in 1965 had led to innovations both substantive and stylistic that had brought him some praise, but also fierce criticism. Much of the latter came from his clergy, especially from the newly organized Association of Chicago Priests, founded in 1966, which challenged Cody on pastoral appointments and diocesan administration.[4]

Not only had members of the class of 1969 found themselves in the midst of changes that they could not control, but they had also

instigated a major change of their own in their training. The seminary ordained men as transitional deacons in the spring, one year before their ordination to the priesthood. Traditionally, the new deacons would simply resume their last year of studies at the seminary after their diaconate ordination. The class of 1969, however, persuaded the seminary rector, Jack Gorman ('52) [the year of ordination for each Chicago priest mentioned will appear in parentheses following the first mention of his name in each chapter], to allow six months of parish apostolate work as part of their diaconate. Class leaders believed that their training must involve actual work with the people of God in addition to their academic, theological, and, as some of them would say, overly theoretical training at Mundelein.

As these 35 deacons walked up the aisle of the chapel on that May morning of 1969, they could not have but noticed two more changes, these to the ritual itself. First, of course, in keeping with the directives of the Second Vatican Council, concluded just four years earlier, Cody presided over Mass in the vernacular, English. Second, the Council had called for a completely new ordination rite containing significant revisions. Mundelein Seminary celebrated this new rite for the first time in 1969. The Introduction to the Mass booklet for the day explains:

> *The meaning of the various parts of the rite has been made more clear. The ordination itself takes place after the Gospel. The address of the Archbishop to the people and those to be ordained is the homily of this Mass. Then, there is (1) the interrogation of the candidates, (2) the promise of obedience to the bishop, (3) the litany of the saints, (4) the imposition of hands and the prayer of consecration, (5) the anointing of hands, and finally (6) the conferral of the paten with the bread and the chalice with the wine mixed with water.*

"This revised rite of Ordination to the Priesthood," the writer of the booklet noted, foreshadowing much of his class' belief about and attitude toward the laity, "is intended to help us participate in today's liturgy more intelligently and more actively."[5]

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When the opening procession and prayers had ended, the congregation could at last take their seats for the first reading from 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-7, referred to in Church circles as "Earthen Vessels." The fifth and seventh verses capture the heart of the passage.

> *It is not ourselves we preach, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake…. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels, to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us.*[6]

Perhaps this reading lingered in the subconscious of the new Father Edward Upton in the hour after the ordination Mass had concluded. Immediately after the ceremony, in what was a long-standing tradition at the seminary, the newly ordained stationed themselves in alphabetical order around the statue of the Immaculate Conception in front of the chapel to give their first blessings to family and friends. Seminarians had long ago nicknamed it the "DIME" statue because below the sculpture of the Virgin Mary sat four of the Old Testament prophets, Daniel, Isaiah, Moses, and Ezekiel. Upton stood between Father Ray Tillrock and his friend since high school seminary days, Father Bill Zavaski.

After finishing his blessings, Upton headed toward the cafeteria to attend the luncheon for families of the newly ordained. On the way there, he encountered a stranger.

> *Some lady came up to me. I had no idea who she was. She said, "Father, can I have your blessing?" Then it really clicked. This is the change. That people whom you don't know now have a right to ask you to do something. That little moment I remember more than the whole thing. It helped me focus that it's a different world now. I have a responsibility to not just who I know, but even strangers. I can't just say, "I've got to go have lunch, sorry, dear." So it's funny how that little thing just clicked in my mind.*

Upton recalled the joy of the day. "My mother had rheumatic

heart disease when she was a child," he remembers, "so she had a damaged heart valve which they couldn't in those days correct. She had been in and out of the hospital, so it was really nice that she was able to be alive and be there, because she died a year later." An only child, Upton came from a small extended family and had a smaller contingent present at the ordination than many of his classmates. His encounter with the stranger on the way to lunch had clearly pointed to a future with expanded connections and responsibilities.

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After the conclusion of the first reading, the Liturgy of the Word continued with the Alleluia and the Gospel, John 15:9-17. Verses 12-13, in particular, set forth a clear mission:

> *This is my commandment:*
> *Love one another*
> *As I have loved you.*
> *There is no greater love than this:*
> *To lay down one's life for one's friends.*

Father Tom Libera remembered the moment not long after Cody had proclaimed that Gospel, when the community prayed the Litany of the Saints over the seminarians. "You're prostrate on the floor in front of everybody at the altar," he recalls, "so that's a very dramatic moment of giving yourself over." He reflected on his struggles to arrive at that point of giving himself to a life of priesthood, asking himself at times, "Am I willing to go through another year? Do I really want to pursue a path that will not take me into marriage? There were moments where you had to be tested and say which scale was going to win out." In his recollections about ordination day, Libera lingered on those he loved, both present and absent, who had helped bring him to his moment of decision. "I remember my mother," he begins. "My dad had died already, but she and some relatives and friends were there—my brother, uncles, and aunts." Libera also treasured that many friends attended from his time doing summer work on the West Side of Chi-

cago at St. Frances Cabrini Parish. "There were a number of us," Libera says, referring now to his classmates, "who were involved in summer apostolic work in the inner city. That fueled that you were going to be able to make a contribution."

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The Rite of Ordination began after the reading of the Gospel. The deacon of the Mass called forth the candidates who each responded, "I am ready and willing." Of course, the process that had led them to this moment had not been so simple. "Leading up to that," Father Bob Heidenreich reflects, "there were all sorts of questions: Am I doing the right thing?" Heidenreich recalled that seven men from the class who had already been ordained as transitional deacons had left the seminary before priestly ordination. "That heightened the question," Heidenreich says, "what's wrong with them…or with me?" He also remembered questions arising in his own mind at the time of the class' diaconate ordination a year earlier.

> *We were going up to the altar to sign our pledge of celibacy. I remember talking to whoever it was in front of me in line saying that it doesn't really make too much difference because—now this is the '60s—the promise of celibacy is going to be done away with in the not too distant future.*

Heidenreich's disappointments about classmates leaving and his questions about celibacy, however, actually strengthened his vocation to priestly ministry. Referring to his departed classmates, he comments, "They realized they could do in the Church what they wanted to without being ordained. We were at the beginning of the insight into what are now the different lay ministries present in parishes. The insight these guys had was valid. The thing I liked—and maybe this is ego—is that the priest was core to this happening."

> *Most of the images of pastors we had were dominant people that ordered people around and controlled everything. But I had this*

image of what if it was somebody that could enable people like my classmates and say, hey, that's a great idea, why can't we do this, and wouldn't that lead to a vibrant parish life and to even more people getting involved in Church in a meaningful way.… It's ironic because this image was very much influenced by my classmates, the ones ordained and the ones who weren't ordained.

Parish life as a deacon in the months leading up to ordination day had only served to reinforce Heidenreich's nascent ideas about ministry. "The thing that got me to that ordination more than anything," he says, "was my experience as a deacon at Holy Ghost Parish in South Holland. It was just the ordinary things of parish life like standing out in front of church and getting to know the younger people. I started to see the building blocks of community, people who had some ability to minister, who had insight about what the Church could be, who were generous, and who liked a lot of fun. So when I said yes, I want to be ordained," he notes, reflecting back on his own "I am ready and willing" response in the Ordination Rite, "it was in a very proactive Church where you formed community as the basis for everything you do. That's what I've done and it was by God's grace. I've thought of this often, that I could've gone to Rome and applied for laicization based on what I said in line going to sign the [celibacy] document. But I never gave that much thought because this is where I knew I should be."

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After Archbishop Cody had examined the candidates, the Rite of Ordination continued with the Promise of Obedience. Each candidate knelt in turn before the archbishop who clasped his hands around the joined hands of the candidate. "Do you promise me and my successors obedience and respect?" Cody asked. Each seminarian replied, "I do." In 1969, however, the ordination class, like many young people throughout the country in and out of the Church, found themselves questioning the real meaning of the concepts of obedience and authority. When Father Larry Duris thought back to ordination day, one of

his first memories had to do with a potential protest. "It was the first time," he recalls, "they had Andy Frain [a local security company] ushers up there to fend off protesters." Project Equality, a non-profit group dedicated to advancing racial equality in the workplace, had picketed several events at which Cody had appeared due to his opposition to the group.[7] "The word was out," Duris continues, "that they were going to appear. We didn't have anyone protesting the fact that we were all male. That would come later. But they had Andy Frain ushers at the door." Although the protest never materialized, Duris well understood the commotion surrounding the possibility of it as a marker of the signs of the times. "That was fine with us," he says, speaking for his classmates about the anticipated protest.

Push for change within the seminary mirrored the social change occurring in society. "Everything happened in 1968," Duris recalls, "King was killed, Bobby [Kennedy] was killed. You had riots that summer, the police riot here. Richard Milhous [Nixon] was elected. *Humanae Vitae*." Duris says of his classmates, "We looked at change in the Church like it couldn't happen fast enough." Duris had no love for the old seminary.

> *The old model we experienced, you locked people up for six years…two years of philosophy and four years of theology, away from the world, almost literally. You were still hopefully at the end of this a human being of sorts. Then you're thrown into a parish setting and expected to be effective with people. And you had the culture shift and the Church shift. When we were ordained, Father was no longer God in the way he had been. The way of looking at women was changing. Some of the cultural paradigms were falling apart. We were moving into a different world.*

Duris thought back fondly to the attempt of Msgr. Jack Gorman to address the changes the class faced. Gorman had taught them at Quigley, the high school seminary, and had moved with them to teach at Niles, the college seminary. He had then become rector of Mundelein Seminary midway through their first year of theology. Just before the class signed their celibacy papers prior to their diaconate ordina-

tion in 1968—"as we said, signing away our sexuality"—Gorman addressed the class. According to Duris, he said:

> *I have high regard for you guys. When I was ordained in '52 we had locked up in our minds what priesthood was. My vision has changed since then. But it seemed clear cut what was expected. You guys are coming in where it's more fluid in terms of what ministerial priesthood is in relation to other ministries. And all kinds of people are leaving ministry. It's like you're trying to get through this revolving door and there's a bigger crowd rushing out the other way. So I have high respect for you.*

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At the end of the short prayer following the promise of obedience, Cody knelt at his seat and the congregation joined him on their knees. The candidates prostrated themselves on the marble floor and began to listen intently as the whole community present prayed over them, invoking in song the names of the Church's heroes and heroines and asking for their prayers in the great Litany of the Saints. Following the Litany, the candidates stood and prepared for the actual moment of ordination: the laying on of hands. One by one each candidate would kneel before the archbishop, who would place his hands on the candidate's head and pray over him. Then, in a grand show of presbyteral fraternity and unity, a large number of the priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago, most of whom, due to lack of space, had waited outside the chapel, processed in and joined their archbishop in laying their hands on the candidates. As soon as they completed their part in the ritual, the assembled clergy walked back outside to continue socializing. "One of the big moments visually," Father Mike Ahlstrom recalls, "is when you lay prostrate on the floor during the Litany. That's a very dramatic moment. Everybody takes pictures. I can remember thinking, 'This is a hard floor. I wish they would get over with this thing.'"

> *Yet there was a sense that all these people were praying for us, all the saints were interceding for us. Then the big moment*

of ordination. I remember going up to Archbishop Cody and kneeling. He pressed down hard. I thought, he wants to make sure he's really ordaining us. Not that it was painful, but you knew you had hands laid on you.

Ahlstrom's ability to focus on the liturgical moment at hand foreshadowed his lifelong love of liturgy. "We had picked our own music," he remembers. "One song was 'My God is a Rock.' It rocked."[8] Ahlstrom had been deeply involved in the ordination Mass planning because he served as the seminary's liturgical master of ceremonies, in charge of coordinating services in assistance to the priests celebrating them.

Because of the new rites coming out after Vatican II, I had revamped the whole system. I was telling Msgr. Gorman beforehand, "This is what you do." He said, "I won't worry, you'll be up there to help me." I said, "No, if you don't mind, I'd like to get ordained."

Like his classmates, Ahlstrom reflected on the tradition of first blessings, but he recalled some wistfully. "I blessed a number of friends that did not go on to ordination," he notes. "Some were the ones I was closest to. There was a group of ten of us that was today what you'd call a basic Christian community. Of the ten, only four of us were ordained." What affected Ahlstrom even more than his classmates' seminary departures "was watching some of the faculty leave the priesthood. My spiritual director left just before I was ordained." Ahlstrom had, in addition, invited the director of the deacon program, Father Bob Doherty ('56), to concelebrate his first Mass. "He turned down my request," Ahlstrom says. "I couldn't understand it because at the ordination he was on the Archbishop's left. I found out that immediately after the ordination he married the first woman faculty member of Mundelein. That probably set back women faculty for a while!"

Ahlstrom's vivid memories of ordination day notwithstanding, his mother's comments a few days later made an even more lasting impact. "She said," Ahlstrom fondly recalled, "'Don't think I'm going to call you Father.' I said, 'You better not, I'm your son.' Then she said,

which put me in my place, 'You better take out the garbage. We've got company coming over. You're still part of the family.' While she was very proud of me, she reminded me of who I am: 'Don't think you're above anybody.'"

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The Ordination Rite continued with Cody's prayer over the newly ordained and then the Investiture of the Stole and Chasuble, the liturgical vestments worn by the priest when presiding at Mass, followed by the Anointing of Hands. Next, the entire assembly prayed "Veni, Creator Spiritus," or "Come, Holy Spirit," and the archbishop presented each of the newly ordained with bread on a paten and wine and water in the chalice. When Cody gave the Kiss of Peace to his new clergy, the assembled priests, gathered outside the chapel, once more processed in to join the archbishop in offering peace. "I'll never forget," chortles Father Bill Zavaski, "some woman in the crowd, when the priests started lining up, yelled out real loud 'Not again!' It was classic because the kiss of peace took forever." Grief, however, stood side by side with humor. "It was very painful," Zavaski laments over classmates who had left the seminary prior to priesthood ordination. "It never made me think twice about wanting to be ordained. I was totally focused on that. But these were your friends, and it was tough to see them go."

Not even the departure of his classmates, however, could cancel out the optimism, excitement, and joy that Zavaski felt on ordination day.

> *It was cloudy and cold at the beginning of the day, with a lot of anxiety about the whole process. Then it was like a* Camelot *scene. Right after ordination the sun broke through. It was a glorious day. I was so excited about being ordained a priest. It was something you've been working on for twelve years. We sang "Moon River" on the steps. I think everybody remembers that. That was our class song.*

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After the newly ordained filed out of the chapel at the conclusion of the over three-hour liturgy on their way to the DIME statue to give first blessings, the ushers handed each member of the congregation a holy card commemorating the event.[9] The back of the card listed the 37 members of the class of 1969, including two from other dioceses not ordained at Mundelein. Underneath appeared "James Kelly 1943-1968," a classmate who had died during the third year of theology, along with a simple prayer: "Please pray for him and us." For the front of the card, the class had chosen a quote from Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), the Jesuit mystic and theologian. Chardin's theology had included many controversial ideas that drew both the Jesuits' and the Vatican's ire. As late as 1962, seven years after his death, the Holy Office denounced his books for being dangerous to the faith, especially for youth. The young class of 1969 nevertheless chose the quote from Chardin, because it encapsulated their passion as they began their new ministry as priests to share fully in the human condition.

To the extent of my power
Because
I am a priest
I wish from now on
To become conscious of all
That the world loves
Pursues and suffers….
I want to become
More widely human than any
Of the
World's servants.[10]

Soon they would get their chance to serve the Chicago archdiocese. For now, however, they stood around the DIME statue and blessed their fathers, mothers, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins, friends, and also parishioners from their apostolate, deacon, and home parishes. Once finished with first blessings, they headed to the cafeteria with their closest family members to dine, while the remainder of the congregation and the priests who had

come up for the day wandered off to the gymnasium, where the class had provided a catered lunch.

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1. *Ordination to the Order of Priest*, Mass booklet for Class of 1969 Ordination, May 14, 1969. Ordination text by International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., 1969. Entrance Song: Richard Wojcik (text), "God of Our Fathers," American Catholic Press, Oak Park, IL, 2.
2. Ibid., Introduction.
3. *The New World*, April 10 through May 16, 1969.
4. Cody's relationship with the ACP is best covered in Charles Dahm, *Power and Authority in the Catholic Church: Cardinal Cody in Chicago* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).
5. *Ordination to the Order of Priest*, May 14, 1969.
6. *The New American Bible* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1970), 213-214.
7. For more on Project Equality, see letter to the editor from Chicago political activist Don Rose in *The American Prospect*, vol. 11, 2000.
8. "My God is a Rock," a black spiritual arranged by Richard Wojcik, was the third Communion sung song at the Ordination Mass. *Ordination to the Order of Priest*, May 14, 1969, 20.
9. Mass Card of the Class of 1969, given by Father Michael Ahlstrom.
10. The quote is from a letter Chardin wrote to his cousin Marguerite Teilhard on October 7, 1915. The information on the Vatican denunciation is from *Warning Considering the Writings of Father Teilhard de Chardin*, Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, June 30, 1962.