

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

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## **The Sacraments and the Life of the Church: Sacraments and Orthodoxy**

Review Author: Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, S.J.

*Philippine Studies* vol. 14, no. 4 (1968): 711–712

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

God. . . . Placing the word Orthodox between inverted commas [arouses resentment] . . . . To appreciate the resentment. . . we have simply to ask ourselves how we should feel. . . if they never gave the title of our church without putting "Catholic" between inverted commas (pp. 106-107 and note).

One subject, admittedly a difficult one, on which the reader might desire more unity of opinion among the several authors is the number of Eastern Christians. The figures given in the publisher's note (pp. 14-15) would seem to total a little less than 100 million. This mounts to 117 million on page 43, and to 250 million on page 148.

The proof-reader has overlooked a number of misprints; e.g., p. 13, line 15 should read *outstanding*, 15, 13 *their*, 37, 2 *Greek*, and 154, 19 *snobbery*.

THOMAS J. O'SHAUGHNESSY, S.J.

## THE SACRAMENTS AND THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

SACRAMENTS AND ORTHODOXY. By Alexander Schmemmann. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. 142 pp.

Father Schmemmann, Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York, and an Orthodox priest, has written an ecumenical book that views the problems of the present time in relation to the sacramental experience had in the Christian liturgy. The book is not meant for theologians, having been written as a study guide for a conference of the World Christian Student Federation, but because of its new emphases and unusual viewpoints it will provoke many theologians to reflection.

Fr. Schmemmann speaks forcefully about the Church as a social institution. The tendency to see in it a "being in itself" instead of the relation between God, man, and the world puts one in danger of ecclesiolatry. In reality the Church is a sacrament enabling man to see the "world to come" in and through this world. To present it as a comfort or as a reasonable investment of time and money and to put "Welcome" and "Keep smiling" signs in its buildings is alien to Christ's spirit. Life in the Church means humility, obedience, and discipline.

But it does not mean clericalism. Christ was killed by the clergy and His sacrifice abolished their enthroned place as it abolished "religion," because it destroyed the wall of separation between the profane and the sacred. If the secular world of today respects the

clergy, it is the kind of respect it accords to cemeteries—both are needed; both are sacred; both are out of life.

Turning to the sacraments, Fr. S. deplors the overemphasis on the juridical side of penance and would prefer to see in absolution the sign of the return of the prodigal to Christ. As for marriage, the real sin against it today is the idolization of the family itself, expressed in the sentiment that one would “do anything” for one’s family—even steal. Marriage is definitely not the concern only of those who are being married. That kind of selfishness the Christian relinquishes in baptism, which, as the death of one’s self love and the likeness of Christ’s death, is unconditional self-surrender. This is the virtue too of the candidate for holy orders. Since God made man to offer the world to Him in a sacrifice of love and praise, he is the priest of creation. Understood in relation to this fact, the Christian priesthood is the essence of manhood and Christ is the one true priest, because He is the one true and perfect man.

The book speaks frankly of Christian failures as well as Christian glories. It is not meant to be reassuring reading, but its deep insights and vivid expression will stimulate thought in those who are willing to think.

THOMAS J. O’SHAUGHNESSY, S.J.

## PROCLAMATIONS OF THE WORD

TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD, HOMILIES AT MASS. By Gerard S. Sloyan, New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. 304 pp.

Fr. Sloyan gives us here a selection of homilies which he preached over a period of twenty months. They are good examples of homilies: They spring almost palpably from the Scripture readings of the Mass for the day—in fact they can be appreciated only after reading the Epistle and Gospel referred to. Secondly, they incarnate the Scripture into the lives of present-day hearers. Finally (no mean feat for a preacher) each homily averages less than three minutes of slow delivery.

A word of warning: As Fr. Sloyan insists in the foreword, this is a book of homilies; it must be read aloud (and I would add, slowly). I tried to cheat in my first reading. The rapid pace only left me a cloying disgust at the banality of Fr. Sloyan’s style. But a second *slow, vocal* reading transformed the homilies into vibrant proclamations of Christ’s Word for us. Chalk it up to “economy of