

Author: Paul F. Bosch [pbosch@golden.net]

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FUN WITH DICK AND JANE – AT WORSHIP

1 “Liquor is the poor man’s symphony.” The sentiment is Sigmund Freud’s, if I have it correctly. His point: Those who can’t afford to get “high” at the symphony, immersed in the great music of the ages, will find other ways to get high. Liquor – and now drugs – afford one way for the poor to experience some sort of exhilaration in a life otherwise devoid of any “highs.”

2 In at least one previous posting ([Essay 98](#)) I have maintained that Christian worship owes it to its world to be both “high” and “low.” I use the term high in the sense alluded to above: keyed up, exhilarated, “turned on,” appealing to the best instincts in us, grounded in those instincts, imbedded in those instincts, exhibiting those instincts. High in the sense of “elevating” the soul.

3 Note that in [Essay 98](#) I also argue for our worship being low. Are we “high church?” Of course. Are we also at the same time “low church?” Of course again. See [Essay 98](#) for clarification.

4 Let’s stick with “high” for a few moments. Christian worship – like Christian life – ought to provide some kind of “high” for its devotees.

5 In another way of putting it, Dick and Jane ought to have fun at worship.

6 I’ll grant it: One person’s fun may be another’s drudgery. But we shouldn’t shy away from that word fun. You’ve lost an entire generation of would-be disciples – Hey, you’ve lost me at least! – if you don’t provide worship every Sunday that includes some aspect of “high,” some aspect of fun.

7 Now, how? I have an almost endless list of answers. Thus:

8 First, do not neglect to honour the Tradition. That Tradition includes every-Sunday Word-and-Sacrament. Providing worship that is exhilarating, lively, a treat for all the senses – in a word, fun – should not mean abandoning our splendid Apostolic Christian Tradition. Word-and-Sacrament every Sunday, of course.

9 Second: Honouring that Tradition will include the specific Lutheran tradition. We

have a marvellous treasure in our Lutheran heritage that is the envy of many another denomination and parish. Don't turn your back on it, in any misguided attempt to be relevant or "with it" or "contemporary."

10 In a word, don't be tempted to "dumb-down" what we've got. In fact the reverse: Note that what I propose in the following paragraphs is chiefly an attempt to enlarge Sunday worship by claiming more of the our tradition's riches. We don't do anyone a favour by infantilizing them. The "happy clappy" music of much so-called "youth ministry" is a case in point. So: "Happy clappy" in small doses, please. Don't fear to throw a German chorale or some plainsong at your people in the pew, on occasion. But see below.

11 A choral service, of course. "People sing when they have something to sing about." [Essay 179](#). But remember: The congregation itself is the chief choir. The people in the pew are the ones who should be having fun with those hymns and songs in worship. Any corps of trained and rehearsed voices – what Protestants usually think of as a choir – they are there simply to support and enlarge the people's own ministry of song. [Essays 168](#) and [169](#) and others. At least one hymn in alternation each week. Always a sung psalm. No divas expected or desired.

A sung service implies a sung creed, whenever one is used. See [Essay 138](#) for music for a sung Nicene Creed.

12 Nothing will take the place of a worship leader who is herself giving evidence of having fun at worship. Enthusiasm is contagious. Dick and Jane, in the pew, will catch it. A worship leader who seems invariably glum and gloomy in deportment is no invitation to revelry. You must be yourself, of course. See [Essay 60](#) "Julia Robert's Orthodontist..."

13 Yes, honour the liturgy. But don't be intimidated by it. That sometimes means (Sorry!) interrupting the flow of ritual with a brief chatty aside, in the nature of *mystagogia*. [Essay 162](#). People have to know what's expected of them. They're uncomfortable – and worship isn't any fun – when Dick and Jane are ignorant of what they're supposed to be doing. You're helping worshippers worship, in such moments of mystagogy.

14 Of course, and crucially: Be aware of - and utilize! – the riches of our Tradition. The Church Year Calendar is an under-utilized treasure in most parishes. Note:

15 An Advent Wreath for the Sundays in Advent, of course. A Christmas tree at Christmas. On Epiphany each year, take time at worship's conclusion to "chalk the door" of your building. It will be a model for worshippers to repeat at their homes. There's a rite for "Chalking the Door" to be used every year as a house blessing at this website, Section 2 *ELCIC Resource Archive* under "Occasional Rites and Resources."

There's a further church tradition on Epiphany of announcing the Church Year for the coming twelve months. A worship leader can actually sing it, entone it, to a simple

melody. I'll have to devote a subsequent Essay to "Announcing the Church Year on Epiphany."

16 On each of the Sundays in Lent, utilize in worship one of the six Scrutinies. See [Essays 146](#) through [151](#). A fine way to add fun – enrichment – to worship and to recall the basics of Christian faith in the stirring words of Luther in his *Small Catechism*. A few words of commentary or mystagogy are absolutely necessary each week.

17 A procession on Palm Sunday, of course. Outside, preferably, as a witness to the neighbourhood. With processional cross, processional banners, and noisemakers for the kids.

18 Make the most of the Great Three Days, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, pages 247 and following, plus corresponding pages in the *Leaders Edition*. The highlight of the calendar. Incredibly rich, sensuous rituals.

19 Be sure to schedule an Easter Vigil each year The *Leaders Edition* again page 643. The most sensuous and complex Service in our worship book. And the most rewarding. So what if only a fraction of your people attend, at first? It will catch on, at least among some. I guarantee it.

20 On the Second Sunday of Easter, *Quasi Modo Geniti*, use the enrichment at Communion suggested at [Essay 90](#). A mini-agape meal!

21 Schedule an Order the the Blessing of the Fields for the conclusion of worship on one of the Sundays in the Easter season – maybe on the Fifth Sunday of Easter, near the traditional "rogation days," the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before the Ascension each year. [Essay 125](#). Rogation is Latin for "praying," presumably for planting and harvesting. No farmers' fields nearby? How about a community garden? A nearby park or lake or stream? Even a garbage dump, or an industrial site noted for polluting? A church procession *there*, with cross and banners, would catch the eye of City Hall!

22 Try to capitalize on any and every occasion for moving people out of their seats. Processions at all Baptisms to the font. Processions at the beginning of worship, not just by choir or leaders, but by the entire assembly. At least on appropriate occasions.

23 Resist the temptation to move the Font forward for any Baptism. Instead, train worshippers to process to the font. Teach them - mystagogy! – to turn their bodies, at the very least, toward the action of worship, wherever that action may be: toward the font at Baptism, toward the Gospeler in a Gospel procession. This was one purpose for a processional cross: In a crowded cathedral, the processional cross located the place where the action was happening: You turned toward it.

24 Make the most of the possibilities already inherent in such rites as Baptisms, whenever they occur in Sunday worship. Always use candle, oil and anointing, even the white garment for the newly baptized. Try to move Baptisms in your parish in the

direction of both nudity and by immersion, both of these apostolic and ecumenical ideals. Removing a jacket at the very least. Can the entire assembly process in Summer to a nearby lake or to a city fountain, to baptize there? You might want to get city permission. You might not.

25 Make it a practice at every Baptism to Invite all the children present to gather at the font with the baptismal party, so kids can witness one of the Church's most exciting moments. By all means use the full "Welcome to Baptism" rite in the *Leaders Edition*, page 592 with its multiple signings with the cross on forehead, eyes, ears, mouth, hands, heart, feet. See also [Essay 152](#).

26 At least once, perhaps several times in the "green" seasons, make it a point to include a Rite of Healing in Sunday Eucharist. *ELWorship* page 276. Great sensuous richness there, including kneeling, laying on of hands, and anointing with fragrant oil.

27 Encourage the entire worshipping assembly to join leaders in a grand corporate *orans* at the Lord's Prayer, at least, whenever it is prayed in worship. Best of all would be to train worshippers to join leaders in a corporate *orans* at every moment of corporate prayer. The charismatics can teach us something.

28 Teach parishioners to sign themselves with the cross at appropriate moments in worship: Look for the little red Greek cross within the words of the texts of the Service. Encourage them to beat their breasts, thrice, during appropriate moments in a Rite of Confession. ("*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa...*" "My fault, my fault, my own most grievous fault...")

29 Find any opportunity you can to add sensuous enrichment to Sunday worship: other instruments, noisemakers, bells, drums, anointing oil, candles, banners, wall graphics (see [Essay 75](#), paragraphs 2, 3, and 5).

30 You don't want worshippers to be confounded with something new at every occasion for corporate worship. On the other hand, Dick and Jane are restless these days. Most Christian worship in most mainline churches is much too static: same old, same old.

31 Keep the Tradition alive and healthy. Honour it. But try something new. It may turn out to be something old!

