

## **Chris Angel, Age 33, on Liturgical Reform**

*[Editor's note: Chris Angel is a liturgy student at Saint John's School of Theology•Seminary.]*

The Roman Catholic Church that I know most intimately – the Catholic Church that I fell in love with – is the Catholic Church of the reformed liturgy. For over twenty years, I have served as a liturgical musician, primarily for Catholic congregations. I have served much of this time in several parishes that were –and are – rather “progressive” in liturgical matters, and – perhaps not coincidentally – filled with life, spirit, and Spirit. These are parishes where I believe the reformed liturgy has been done, by and large, with reverence and grace. For me, the pre-Vatican II liturgy doesn't have any special attraction. Liturgies in this rite that I have attended have struck me as pretentious and anachronistic.

I suspect that one of the greatest problems of liturgical reform is that the parishes where I've served don't represent the mainstream experience. I've visited enough other parishes to see plenty of ... well, I wouldn't call it liturgical abuse, but perhaps liturgical shoddiness. I have a hunch that much of the impetus behind liturgical reform is directed at this shoddiness – which has far too often made the “divine liturgy” far too pedestrian. I wonder if another source of the desire for liturgical reform is a desire for greater unity of the rite – the experiences of Roman Catholics in the United States have been very different in these last two generations, depending on their location and pastoral leadership. It's because of this wide variety of experiences that I really don't have a good sense of what my generation thinks, as our formative liturgical experiences have been so different. But I have the impression that a lower percentage of my generation is active in the Catholic Church right now... and it's hard to know what people are thinking when they're not there.