

National Council Develops 'Consensus' of Churches

By Father John P. Foley
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

New York—A pioneer American ecumenical organization here quietly celebrated its 15th anniversary — and quickly stepped across the threshold to a new era of ecumenism.

The National Council of Churches, an amalgam of a dozen interdenominational organizations which fused in December, 1950, is a cooperative agency of 30 Protestant and Orthodox churches in the United States which have a total membership of 42 million persons.

The Council's most recent and dramatic ecumenical effort has been its continuing dialogue with the Catholic Church—a dialogue which was stimulated by the initiatives of Pope John XXIII and the recently concluded Second Vatican Council, and a dialogue which is assuring new form and bearing significant fruit in the 1966 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which begins Jan. 18.

One of the most significant results of the continuing Catholic-Protestant-Orthodox dialogue is a joint prayer service to be used during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. A leaflet containing the prayers for the service was sponsored by the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches and was recommended by the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs.

A new form in the interfaith discussion is the "living room dialogue"—a joint project of the National Council of Churches' Division of Christian Unity and the national office of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The "living room dialogue" movement—a grass roots exercise in ecumenism—is being promoted on a nationwide basis during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The basic purpose of the movement is to help laymen and laywomen to become more familiar with the fundamental tenets of each other's churches and to strengthen their understanding of their own religious beliefs.

A 256-page guide to seven model "living room dialogues" was edited jointly by Father William B. Greenspun, C.S.P., of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine's Apostolate of Good Will and the Rev. William A. Norgren, executive director of NCC's Faith and Order Department.

The "living room dialogues" were initiated in a pilot program in Worcester, Mass., in January, 1965, and the success of those "evenings of Christian friendship" in which almost 1,500 Catholics and Protestants from 100 congregations participated led to the decision to promote the movement nationally.

Dialogue with Catholicism, however, while it is one of the more dramatic activities of the National Council of Churches,

is only part of the organization's program.

Dialogue with the world on behalf of the member churches is another important—and often equally dramatic—phase of NCC's program.

Last Dec. 3, NCC's general board—the organization's elected governing body, issued a policy statement on Vietnam. The statement said: "We believe that a solution of the problem in Vietnam can be essentially advanced only when action is moved from the battlefield to the conference table."

In an accompanying message to its member churches on the Vietnam question, the NCC general board said:

"Support the efforts of the National Council of Churches in an approach to the World Council of Churches and Pope Paul VI in a common attempt to mobilize the world-wide Christian community in support of a just alternative to war."

Other policy statements issued by the general board in

past meetings include statements on "Federal Aid to Education" and on "Responsible Parenthood."

While such policy statements are not binding on the member churches of the National Council, they do emerge from the meetings of the general board and the larger general assembly only when a strong consensus of opinion exists within one of the two governing bodies. The Vietnam policy statement was approved by a 93-to-10 vote of the general board.

Among the many other significant projects which have been under the direction of the National Council of Churches are:

• The translation and publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

• The resettlement in the United States of 115,000 refugees.

• The maintenance of an extensive relief program through Church World Service.

• Production of radio and television programs.

• Providing basic publication and information-clearinghouse services for member churches. The National Council of Churches operates on an annual budget of \$14 million, most of which is provided by the member denominations.

Even the location of the NCC offices is indicative of the organization's ecumenical orientation. The 19-story Interchurch Center, which overlooks the Hudson River from its commanding position on Riverside Drive in upper Manhattan, serves as well as for the National Council itself. The American office of the World Council of Churches is also located in the building.

The gleaming white limestone structure stands on a one-city-block site donated by the late John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who also donated \$2 million of the \$20 million needed to complete the center.

An exhibit room on the ground floor of the Interchurch Center is a tribute to Dr.

Edwin T. Dahlberg, who served as president of the National Council of Churches from 1957 to 1960. Dr. Dahlberg is now minister-in-residence at Crozer Theological Seminary, Chester, Pa.

The current president of the National Council is 67-year-old Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, of Indianapolis, Ind., the presiding bishop of the 750,000 Evangelical United Brethren Church.

The top executive for most of the day-to-day work of the National Council is its general secretary, Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy, a Baptist with a wide background of ecumenical experience.

Dr. Espy served 11 years as director of the National Student YMCA and was the first American on the Geneva staff of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches. From his office on Riverside Drive in New York, Dr. Espy directs the cooperative efforts of 30 American Christian denominations.

IF, IF, IF . . .

the pastor preaches over ten minutes, he's long winded; his sermon is short, he didn't prepare it.

the parish funds are low, he's a poor business man; he mentions money, he's money mad.

he owns a car he's worldly; he doesn't, he's too late for sick calls.

he visits his parishioners he's nosy; he doesn't, he's being snobbish.

he has fairs and bazaars he's bleeding the people; he doesn't, there isn't any life in the parish.

he takes time in the confessional, he's too long; he doesn't, he's not a good confessor.

he starts Mass right on the minute, his watch is fast; he starts Mass late, he's holding up the congregation.

he redecorates church, he's spending too much money; he doesn't, he's letting it run down.

he's young, he's not experienced; he's old, he should be retired.

he dies—there's no one who will ever replace him!

from Pastoral Life magazine

Priests, Artisans Or Automatons

A young priest at his ordination places his folded hands in the hands of the bishop and promises him "reverence and obedience."

Monsignor Thomas F. Connors, the venerable priest of Blessed Sacrament parish, Rochester, made that promise in 1898. Recently when he reminisced on his 67 years in the priesthood, he said he had "never knowingly broken that promise."

For Monsignor Connors, the promise was not lightly taken and the realization that it has been so faithfully kept was obviously a great consolation to him.

The quiet devotion to duty by Monsignor Connors for so many years has never made the headlines and we think it deserves at least the publicity we give it here in order to counteract the almost daily diet of news reports about a very different kind of priest—the outspoken, opinionated and seemingly disobedient Father Gommar A. DePauw.

Father DePauw is not alone in the priesthood these days in facing a crisis of obedience.

Cardinal Suhard, the remarkable Archbishop of Paris twenty years ago, said that every priest must be a "minister of restlessness"—he has to be "the artisan of the future, of the new order that is developing within the souls of individual men, as well as in the stream of history."

The Cardinal of Paris back in 1949 could only dimly see the challenges of the churning era that began when World War II ended.

Priests who took the Cardinal's advice to be "artisans of the future" and plunged into the turbulent issues of our time—war and peace, civil rights, new ethical outlooks, soaring populations and the growing specter of famine—were often told by both prelates and lay people to go back to their rectories—to spend their time writing out baptismal certificates, babysit teenage picnics and referee domestic battles.

It is little wonder that some priests, remembering that St. Paul told Timothy, "there is no imprisoning the word of God," decided they owed obedience to an authority higher than the one that hemmed them in.

This is that "crisis of obedience" which has puzzled and sometimes scandalized Catholics as they read about priests acting in defiance of their bishops.

Again Cardinal Suhard with a rare wisdom anticipated this time of crisis.

The disobedient priest is convinced he is called by God to do something which his bishop forbids him to do—march in civil rights demonstrations, picket for peace, advocate a change in the Church's moral precepts.

Convinced though he is on such topics, the priest best manifests his unwavering trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance of the Church, said Cardinal Suhard, "by his ready and wholehearted docility to the Church's precepts and suggestions as made known to him through Christ's vicar on earth and his own bishop."

The double tragedy of Father DePauw is that he not only obviously lacks that trust but that he even fails to be an "artisan of the future"—he is but the pitiful voice of one who pleads for the impossible return of "the good old days."

So we come back to our own Monsignor Connors—the priest who has proved in his long priestly life that obedience brings peace not a crisis.

What a joy for other priests too who are also able to discover that both the command of their bishop and the call of God in their conscience are not a dissonance.

—Father Henry Atwell

Don't Burn Your Missals Yet

(This article is reprinted from 'America' magazine.)

By REV. C. J. McNASPY, S.J.

"I like to go to Mass where everything is quiet and in Latin," protested the gentle little man. "That way I can go on using my missal, as I've been doing for years. So, after contributing to my parish, I send what's left of my tax-deductible funds to that Traditionalist Movement. I like my missal!"

Nonplussed, I sputtered something about my own fondness for the missal and tried to assure my friend that the "new liturgy" didn't really mean the end of what is often called the missal age.

He seemed unconvinced, and I gather that a number of other devout people share his distress.

"We may as well face it," said a progressive-minded bishop who was visiting us recently. "Missals are out."

Thus set upon from both right and left, I was coerced into some rethinking. Publishers, too, we hear, are in a state of approaching panic—not so much about recent changes and impending further changes, which they can cope with, but about the whole thing: are we moving into a post-missal era?

The affirmative can mount a pretty persuasive case. The missal we are assured made sense back in the golden days of the liturgical movement. It was an indispensable means to open up the Church's treasury of Scripture and prayer to an unenlightened generation. It marked a step, indeed a leap, from dim isolationist, solipsistic piety into the bright day of social worship.

But, the argument goes, now that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy has passed (and is being implemented, though stumblingly in some dioceses), the private missal becomes the same sort of crutch during Mass that the rosary used to be. Or better, not a crutch so much as a key enabling the devout to enter into a private spiritual chamber and shut out or blur the most communarian of Christian experiences. So we're now in the burny-missal age, not back in the 1930's. Get with it, man.

Then, as though to give the coup de grace to missal defenders, the liturgical Conference announced its forthcoming publication, "The Book of Catholic Worship"—832 pages of propers (save for Epistle and Gospel), hymns and Mass settings, in sturdy hard-cover binding, and all at a fantastically low bulk price. What further use for missals?

The case seems to me no straw soldier to be easily toppled by some quick puff of reputation. In perfect candor, I'm not at all sure what I'd be prepared to do today were I in the missal publishing business.

Then there popped into mind a remarkable talk heard at the past summer's Liturgical Week in Chicago, given by that stalwart of the liturgical renewal, Mary Perkins Ryan. It was

titled "The People, the Missal and the Bible," and it will be available for your perusal once the proceedings are printed.

Mrs. Ryan reminds us: "It is here, in the liturgy, that the whole context gives us the Church's understanding of Scripture . . . here above all that Scripture is the living Word of God, addressed to us here and now." She grants that homily is meant to be the primary means whereby God's Word, proclaimed in the Mass, is opened to us and shown in its relevance to our lives. With no cynicism, but (I suspect) recalling the dismal preaching borne during years of Mass attendance, she adds: "If we are going to wait until every homily effectively does this, we are going to wait a long time." Who cannot corroborate that prophecy?

This means that we are doing an injustice to the Word of God if we do no more than sit through the reading of Epistle

and Gospel—"proclaimed" or not, though more often not—and then submit to what commonly passes for a homily. We can and should, says Mrs. Ryan, do "prayerful study of Scripture ourselves, making Scripture-in-the-liturgy the core of our personal prayer life."

Yes, but why bother with missals? Isn't all Scripture there for our spiritual growth? Can't we open our Bible anywhere? Granted, but no one should forget that Holy Scripture is given us in and by the Church, and that there is a special value in meditating on those texts proposed to us by the Church.

"In this way," continues Mrs. Ryan, "one is praying with the Church, learning to know Christ better with the effort of the praying Church in the context of the Church's life."

And it is too plain to need emphasis that this must be done before Mass, at home, in one's family (or chamber, as

the Bible and the Constitution put it). There is not time enough during Mass.

Once again let me quote Mrs. Ryan, a housewife: "The true fact is, I very strongly believe, that the real day of the missal as an indispensable tool for growth in the knowledge of God is just beginning."

She adds (and I could not agree more strongly): "We also need the kind of commentaries provided by a good modern missal, such as 'The Layman's Missal,' the 'Maryknoll Missal,' the 'Bible Missal' and the larger editions of the 'St. Andrew Missal.'"

In fact, as more and more modern catechists are discovering, the missal, especially in one of these splendidly enriched editions, makes an ideal instrument for religious instruction both at home and in class. While going over the final proofs of "Our Changing Liturgy" (published recently by Hawthorn Books), I was happy to find that even before hearing Mr. Ryan's talk I had written the following: "Perhaps on the evening before, or in the car on the way to church, mother or father could explain the meaning of what is to come, using the fine introductions to Sundays or feast days as given in . . ." (here appears the same list of missals mentioned above).

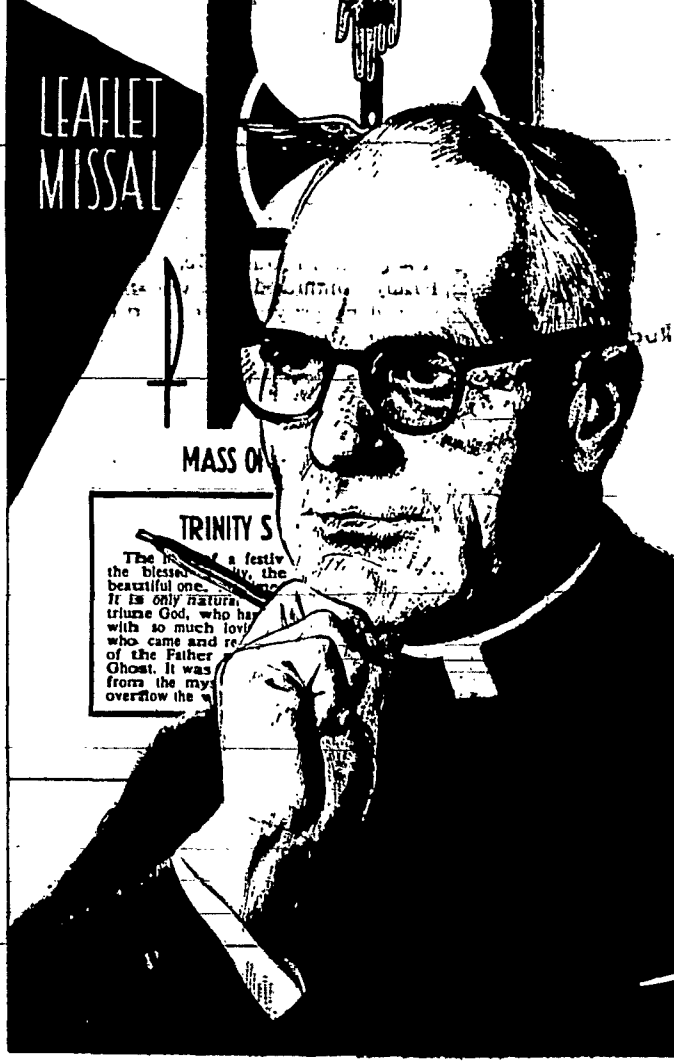
Even after parishes provide the people with copies of "The Book of Catholic Worship" and pews are once again uncluttered of cards and sheet music, and we no longer have to lug our missals to church, we will still need them at home. This for meditation, additional reading and pointed "family homilies."

In fact, one wonders who will be the first publisher to produce a large family-sized missal, handsomely illustrated and bolstered with commentaries for family use, aimed at a market of perhaps a million or more.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy reminds us that the Church offers another official prayerbook for our spiritual sustenance: "The liturgy, too, are encouraged to pray the Divine Office—even individually." Benziger has just issued an attractive English volume, "Morning and Evening Prayers of the Divine Office" (Lauds, Vespers and Compline for the entire year). The print is large and quite legible, and the price reasonable (\$46, \$5.95).

As the Constitution explains, Lauds and Vespers are the "two hinges" and the "chief hours" of the Divine Office, for priests, religious and faithful.

So no one should suppose that we are at the end of the renewal. Further and less marginal reforms are under way, though it is anyone's guess whether we are to see them within three or five years. They will include a far richer selection of biblical readings as promised in the Constitution, a better structured and more luminous shape of the liturgy, and other pastoral improvements. Meanwhile, we can do more than wait fretfully; we can make fuller use of our present missals.



Liturgy and Life

Father Paul C. Bussard, a priest of the St. Paul archdiocese, has been one of the chief advocates of a full participation of the laity in the liturgical worship of the Church for nearly four decades. One of the founding editors of the Catholic Digest, Father Bussard also served as an associate editor of Orate Fratres (Worship) and wrote a syndicated column on the Mass for U.S. diocesan weeklies. His "Leaflet Missal" continues to place the Sunday Mass texts into the hands of millions of Americans. The 61-year-old priest's writings include: "If I Be Lifted Up" (1929), "Living Source" (36), "Staircase to a Star" (38), "The Vernacular Missal in Religious Education" (37), and "The Meaning of the Mass" (co-author, 42).

Have We a Latin American Policy?

By GARY MacEOIN

"Virtually everywhere, from the top to the bottom and from the Right to the Left . . . a general distrust and suspicion of the Johnson administration and a very wide anti-American feeling." That is what columnist Walter Lippmann found on a recent trip to South America. Our relations with the Latin Americans continue to deteriorate he sums up. There is "an urgent, almost desperate, need for change at the highest levels in Washington."

In Rome, during the last session of the Council, I talked to scores of Latin American bishops, advisers to bishops, and newsmen. Almost without exception, the views they expressed to me confirm the conclusion which Lippmann has now reached.

They find Washington talking rapid social progress while ready to use force to block social change. They find the United States public bored with Latin America while concerned about less urgent problems of their own country and the other continents. Earlier in 1965, I had made

a 2-month tour of nine Latin American countries, and what I then saw and heard fell into the same pattern.

The intensified anti-United States sentiment does not flow merely from our sponsorship and support of military dictatorships. Many are willing to concede that tough controls are needed to end inflation and corruption, and to accumulate capital by curbing the antisocial spending of the wealthy.

What they do not understand is how Washington can confine its concern to the military elements of the equation. "The dictatorship holds back the explosion, but if the social and population pressures continue to mount, as they are mounting, the day of the catastrophic release has to come," one bishop said to me. "You provide a breathing space in which to work frantically for social progress, and then you fritter it away in business as usual."

As for the Alliance for Progress, few take it seriously these days. "Try to look honestly at the economic facts," another

bishop said to me. "The aid you offer bears no realistic relationship to the needs, nor indeed to your ability to help. The strings attached have become chains. Only United States big business benefits. Each year the gap between our living standards and yours grows wider. Each year you withdraw more capital in interest, dividends, repatriation of principal and inflated prices for the goods we must import than we get for our exports plus Alliance aid. Our capital needs for development grow. Our available capital diminishes. This is something we long suspected, but now it is fully documented by United Nations studies."

The mood of these and other speakers was one of sorrow more than anger. "We are going to transform Latin America," one said to me. "We have no choice. If you lack the enlightened self-interest to help us, we'll do it in spite of you and—if necessary—against you."

The confidence that Latin America can transform itself by its own efforts is something new. Several bishops expressed it to me, usually in the context of what

the Council said in Schema 13 on man's new realization of his powers, of what the Brazilians call "conscientizacao," the development of group awareness. "Passivity is a thing of the past," an archbishop told me. "Even at the lowest levels, people are rapidly growing aware of what is happening in the world and what can happen in their own backyard."

"If the people in the United States ever find that out," I suggested, "they will be mightily relieved to know they don't have to underwrite the transformation."

"That is for them to decide," he answered. "They have at least two case histories in this century of rapid development without external help. A preliminary step is to seize all fixed assets and to suspend practically all trading with the outside. Your businessmen won't like that. Next comes the stage of xenophobia, then that of aggressiveness, then the need for nuclear bombs along with the ability to manufacture them. No, I don't think there is much reason to be relieved at the prospect."

You can continue to help Bishop Kearney in his work for immortal souls.



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