

# Bishops Affirm: Celibacy To Stay

Following is the text of the Statement on Clerical Celibacy issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (Nov. 16) during its meeting in Washington, D.C.

It is with deep satisfaction that we the Bishops of the United States, gathered in conference to study and to appraise the needs and achievements of the Church in our country, note with sincere gratitude the many efforts of the people of God to renew themselves in order to further the mission of Christ.

We see this as a response in the Holy Spirit to the challenge of a message of the Council. We view this, too, as the whole Church ever-young and ever-old humbly admitting its shortcomings and striving for that holiness which is a mark of the beloved bride of Christ.

We note with regret some areas in which the response seems uneven; as such it is construed by many as a reserve toward or lack of confidence in those whom Christ has constituted to be teachers and shepherds of His flock.

Specifically we are concerned about the attitude which manifests itself in some of our beloved priests, seminarians and others of God's people in regard to the traditional discipline of priestly celibacy.

The Council teaching on this particular discipline in the Western Church is clear and unmistakable. The Decree on Priestly Formation directs that candidates for the priesthood should be carefully prepared to appreciate and to embrace freely, willingly and without reservation the state of clerical celibacy. With full understanding of the holiness of marriage, they are called by the Church to dedicate themselves to the Lord with an undivided love and bear witness to the state which the resurrection will bring about in the world to come. (Luke, 29, 36. Decree on Priestly Formation, #10).

The Decree on the Ministry and Life of a Priest (#16) also approves and confirms celibacy for those who have responded to the call of Christ to share in a special way his priesthood.

At our meeting last April, we urged: "... that seminary formation programs be so deepened that the present generation of young men may be attracted to the positive idealism and the freely embraced discipline to which Vatican II recommitted the Church." This was a reaffirmation of our statement expressed together with the bishops of the world at the Council.

In June of this year the Holy Father fulfilling his promise to the Council expressed himself in the Encyclical "On Priestly Celibacy." With full and sympathetic consideration of the objections voiced against celibacy and with a clear understanding of the arguments advanced for making it optional, he solemnly reaffirmed the practice of the Western Church. He spoke as one aware not only of the freedom of all men, but also of the freedom of the Church to ordain only those genuinely disposed to accept her full discipline.

United as we are with the successor of St. Peter in the common responsibility of teaching and serving; we proclaim with a single voice the same teaching and enjoin the same discipline without reservation.

Confirmed by our Christian experience as lived in our own country and conscious of human frailty in all its dimensions, we are firmly convinced that priestly celibacy grounded in Christ's invitation has been and will be a source of great advantage to the Church particularly in the United States.

It would, consequently, be irresponsible on our part to hold out any hope that this discipline will be changed. Such expectation is without foundation.

We say this to our brother priests with full consciousness of the burden we carry. We know the loneliness that at times accompanies the life of the priest. We know, too, that Christ shared this human condition but was able to say: "I am not alone but the Father is with me." (John 13, 1) Our priestly vocation enables us to reach out to everyone as Christ did with an all-embracing love.

With sorrow we say that some voices we hear today can hardly be described as expressing respectful acceptance. Let those who speak in such manner realize that they give the impression of not only challenging established discipline but of rejecting values that touch our Catholic beliefs to the scandal of the faithful and with notable detriment to vocations.

It is true that the Pope asks for further study and meditation on celibacy but not as a step to a "relaxation of existing law" nor "as a prelude to its abolition." His plea is directed to a deeper understanding of what it means to be associated in the priesthood of Christ and share His exclusive dedication to His mission of salvation.

We repeat that plea without exception among us and without qualification. Our Holy Father explicitly said: "It would be much better to promote serious studies in defense of the spiritual meaning and the moral value of virginity and celibacy."

His appeal for study in no way weakens his solemn words: "Hence we consider that the present law of celibacy should today continue to be firmly linked to the ecclesiastical ministry (No. 14)..."

# Pope Pleased with Synod's Work: Cardinal Krol

Philadelphia — The action of Pope Paul VI in ordering the printing of the recommendations of the recently completed Synod of Bishops in Rome places him in a position of "implicitly accepting" all those recommendations, according to John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia, one of four elected U.S. delegates to the synod.

With an advisory group such as the synod, Cardinal Krol said, the person or group advised usually accepts recommendations without publishing them and acts after considering the recommendations but not necessarily in accord with them.

Pope Paul's action, the cardinal said, was a "compliment to the synod."

Cardinal Krol, who spoke at a press conference the day after his return from Rome, said of his attendance at the synod: "I have never at any time in my life been so encouraged and inspired."

The cardinal noted that all the synod members had "a genuine anxiety to promote the best interests of the people of God."

"One of the very gratifying aspects of the synod," he said, "was that bishops from all over the world were substantially in agreement on basic issues."

Commenting on the bishops present for the synod, Cardinal Krol said: "It is impossible to imagine any organization having the capacity to convene — from five different continents — such an array of native intelligence, coupled with high professional training and wide pastoral-practical experience."

"It was the consensus of the participants," the cardinal said, "that the smaller numbers, as well as the fact that these were elected representatives, contributed to an immeasurably higher level of discussions and recommendations than that of the (Second Vatican) Council."

The cardinal noted that since he had been an undersecretary of the council, he was in a position to appreciate the procedural efficiency of the synod's operation. He said the small size of the synod and the ex-

perience of the council enabled the group to move "on a direct course with all deliberations and with decisive and uninterrupted speed."

Cardinal Krol said that, while the report of the doctrinal committee might be considered the most important document emanating from the synod, the very fact of the synod's existence had an unparalleled significance.

"All discussions about the origin, nature, form, purpose, procedure, hopes, successes or shortcomings of the synod," he said, "bring out in bold relief the unprecedented historical reality that the Synod of Bishops is and that by its nature it is a permanent institution."

This the cardinal attributed to "the creative genius and decisive action of the Holy Father."

The cardinal praised the synod as a "grass roots" instrument for making all possible information available to the pope.

"The synod," the cardinal continued, "is a sign and man-

ifestation, as well as an instrument for applying one type of collegial activity. The synod is a channel for the authentic views and information from all parts of the world. With all other sources of information now channeled to the Holy See, the synod will be a yardstick — a ruler for developing instructions, directives and norms which will certainly consider the existing problems in the world and which will be acceptable and welcome to all sections of the Church."

In answer to specific questions, Cardinal Krol said that the "normative Mass" attended by the synod members in the Sistine Chapel evoked "far more enthusiasm on the part of those who formulated it than on the part of those who witnessed it."

The cardinal noted that a suggestion had been made to the Vatican Council entrusted with the task of carrying out the council's liturgical reforms to take action in all areas — including the divine office and the sacraments — and to consolidate their directives on the

Mass. The cardinal alluded to the confusion caused by receiving three directives for changes in the Mass in a relatively short period of time.

Cardinal Krol stated that the international theological committee recommended by the synod would serve as a forum for the expression of views by theologians which would then be tested by other theologians. Theologians would, he said, then have an opportunity to have their ideas tested and scrutinized by their peers.

Speaking of mixed marriages, Cardinal Krol said that the Church had been traditionally opposed to such marriages on the basis of scriptural texts. He said that another scriptural text indicates, however, that the husband can sanctify the wife and the wife the husband.

"Here in the United States," the cardinal said, "where we have 60 million people unchurched, a mixed marriage and the instructions which precede it can bring the unchurched to a realization of their purpose in life and of the purpose of marriage."

## Unique Idea

New York — A leading Protestant churchman has offered a plan whereby Catholics and Protestants can be united in one church without waiting for their differences of belief to be resolved.

The proposal, made by Dr. Douglas Horton, retired dean of the Harvard Divinity School and an observer at the Second Vatican Council, is outlined in "Toward an Undivided Church," a book published jointly by the YMCA's Association Press and the University of Notre Dame Press.

Dr. Horton argues that the issues which divide Catholics and Protestants need no longer keep them from belonging to the same church. Moreover, he insists that immediate church unity will lead to quicker resolution of certain differences, rather than the other way around.

"Our contacts with one another today are growing; they are big with hope," Dr. Horton writes, "but they are hazy and uncertain." He suggests that permission be given to some Catholics and Protestants to join now in a trial "structure" that would be a test model for the undivided church to come.

"I should like to see some preliminary structures attempted that not only would make easier and continuous the various means we are employing in the direction of final embodiment," Dr. Horton explains, "but would give us the experience of working together within a structured whole that would be a direct precedent for the future."

He admits that Protestant Councils of Churches and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church have worked together, but councils "almost inevitably tend to settle down at the level of cooperation and go no further," Dr. Horton points out. His "preliminary structure" would exist outside either church in a kind of trial marriage that would have the blessings of both Catholic and Protestant authorities.

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# Unite Now, Argue Later, Ecumenist Urges



ECUMENICAL OPTIMIST, Dr. Douglas Horton, who thinks that Christian unity is closer than dreamed of, chats with Pope Paul VI during a visit to Rome.

The next step would be to bring this preliminary structure inside the two churches, having a place in each one. "It might be that this embryonic structure I have been speaking of could be... a kind of Articles-of-Confederation body preceding the nation unified under a constitution," Dr. Horton stated.

Most of his book is given over to reasons why immediate union of the Catholic and Protestant church is feasible and to what it would be like, as far as the various beliefs and practices are concerned.

## Thinks It's Possible

"I believe there is nothing in the basic character of our churches to prevent this," he says of the possibility of union in the near future. He notes that the basic promises made at baptism and the beliefs expressed in the Apostles Creed are the same for both Catholics and Protestants. Where the differences lay is in interpretation of various words and expressions. Dr. Horton maintains, and he says that these different interpretations can now be tolerated in one church.

He claims that a dogma as apparently insuperable as that of the primacy of the Pope need not be a barrier to unity. In the "undivided church" Dr. Horton speaks of, "it members

would promise to give the pope, as the person in whom the rights and responsibilities of the church were focused, all the loyalty that was consistent with what they conceived to be their own freedom as Christians, and would receive from the pope, representing the church, promises for the protection of those freedoms."

Dr. Horton said much of his plan is similar to a proposal made at the Council's second session by Archbishop (now Cardinal) Seper of Zagreb. "He said something to this effect: 'Rome on its part should allow Protestant and other groups to maintain themselves just as they are, but with access to all the privileges we ourselves enjoy in the church, including those of government, and they on their part would recognize the primacy of the pope.'"

As for holding to different beliefs, even on major issues, he suggests that "a great many theological questions could be relegated to... purgatorial status where, in dialogue, they could be purged of their defects without being assigned — and their holders with them — to an immediate either-or of heaven or hell."

Dr. Horton, ordained in the United Church of Christ, said that whatever differences can not be resolved by dialogue inevitably would be resolved by

constant re-phrasing of certain teachings or by time itself.

As an example of the latter, Dr. Horton cited the issue of salvation-by-faith-alone as opposed to the necessity of good works. This issue, at the core of Luther's argument against indulgences, was what tore Christendom apart. "I doubt if it would be possible today to develop a first-class debate" on the issue, Dr. Horton said.

Dr. Horton calls this principle "abbassamento" or subsidence, which, together with "aggiornamento," will make many past obstacles to unity no longer relevant, he stated.

## Signs of Hope

As examples, he cites the changing attitudes among both Catholics and Protestants toward Scripture and tradition, with the Catholic Church putting heavier stress on Scripture. Protestants "may be said to have come around in the Catholic point of view, accepting the need for an unwritten tradition," Dr. Horton wrote.

He agrees that both Catholics and Protestants would have to give up some of their prejudices against beliefs they had previously looked down upon. He added that in this matter, the burden would fall mostly upon Protestants.

"Obviously the one that will

have to make the greater adjustment is the one that is more lightly laden, and in the Catholic-Protestant encounter, this would entail a high degree of accommodation on the part of Protestantism."

As for such matters as papal infallibility, the immaculate Conception, canonization of saints, and dogma of the Assumption and other doctrines, Dr. Horton wrote, "It is possible that later theology will find undeniable truth at the heart of these pronouncements, some of which seem so very unlikely to the non-Catholic Western mind. This is all a subject for dialogue."

He added that "in a united church, Protestants would have to become more tolerant than they are... We have to come to the point of believing that a united church, in which each part would accept the idiosyncrasies of every part and strive by example and education to develop the life of the church toward perfection, would outweigh the disadvantages of being linked with what we deem to be superstition and ignorance."

As for Catholics, "it would be a matter not so much of coming to terms with new procedures as of taking on a partnership with people who seemed lackadaisical, weakly sentimental, people who do not translate their sentiments into discipline."

## Short Reply

### Breaks Them Up

Washington — (NC) — Newsmen attending a press panel conducted in connection with the meeting here of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops sought to learn the length of a "collective pastoral" letter the bishops were said to have under discussion.

"The proposed pastoral letter was 132 pages and has been shortened," a reporter observed. "Can we get an idea of how long it is going to be?"

"It is going to be almost 130 pages," Auxiliary Bishop John J. Dougherty of Newark replied. The panel, newsmen and bishops alike, "broke up" in laughter.

Putting it another way, Dr. Horton tells Catholics: "If you are a person who likes a well-ordered ménage and you have ever had to live with another who likes to take things a bit easier, leaving clothes on the dresser or even on the floor, you have had some hint of one of the problems that the ecumenical church would bring to the Catholic."

(Catholic Press Features)

# Journalists Swap Views on Bishops' Synod

By GARY MACEOIN

Rome — "The dynamism released by Vatican Council II is restoring the solid idea that it is the people of God who make up the Church. The people of God, meditating on the divine message in the Gospels and carrying that message out in the way they lead their lives, should be reflected into the structures of the Church and should affect the people whose job it is to direct the spiritual life and the commitment of the Church to the world."

The speaker was Father Francis X. Murphy, C.S.R., professor of moral theology at the Academia Alfonsiana in Rome, a peritus at Vatican II. The time was the closing day of the Synod of Bishops, a peritus at Vatican II. The subject: "Was the Synod of Bishops worth the effort?" The co-discussants were Father Edward Heffner, C.S.C., English-language press officer for three sessions of the Council and for the Synod, James O'Garra, editor of Commonweal, and myself. I pass on some more nuggets from the same mine.

O'Garra: "For the first time I begin to understand how the Reformation hap-

pened. In the last five years, we've had a complete revolution in the culture, in the climate, in the intellectual opinion, at least in the United States. We've got people thinking of the Church in terms they never would have dreamed of thinking of it five years ago. Great possibilities for gain are here, but also possibilities for disaster unless we move correctly."

Heston: "The Synod has been worth the effort. That has been clearly reflected in the mentality of the bishops and the others who took part. It has had an awakening effect on the Church, made us realize the presence and gravity of certain problems. The effect on Catholic and world opinion was good. It shows a Church less moribund than before. The bishops had the opportunity to speak out. They realized that they could do more in the structures of the Church than just as individual agents."

O'Garra: "It did not do what the propo-

posers suggested when the idea was put forward originally at the Council. It was a terribly Churchy agenda. There was grave disappointment at the absence of such items as birth control, a burning concern for millions of Catholics all over the world, and clerical celibacy which

many priests of many countries petitioned to have included."

Heston: "The actual agenda items, reform of canon law, dangers to the faith, seminary reform, mixed marriages and liturgy, were the big questions on which the Holy Father wanted help."

Murphy: "The Synod must be seen as the development of a structure. The issues were perhaps not so important. What is significant is this new way of exercising papal authority. The primary dependence of the Pope on the Curia for advice is being transferred to residential bishops who know or should know what's going on."

MacEoin: "The items discussed may be more important than they appear. They are a clearing away of issues that must be resolved before the bigger ones can be faced realistically."

may not know about... Normal times permit an organic growth. But today people are making critical decisions about whether they belong to the Church, how they relate to the Church, whether the Church has meaning for them. They won't wait 20 or 30 years."

Murphy: "Not only the discussion on mixed marriage but that on the liturgy sounded very legalistic and formalistic. Can we change the structure of the Mass? Should we encourage more different ways of saying the Canon? How much vernacular should be forced on people who resist? They did not get down to the fundamental problem of the liturgy as a way of life."

Heston: "The summations in the official press bulletin did not represent the complete discussion. I wouldn't say that this other element was completely lacking."

MacEoin: "Many bishops seemed anxious to get to the end of the liturgical experimentation, to hold up all movement until we are sure we have it right, then launch the new look once for all. Such an idea is totally opposed to the concept of a continually developing world in which we can never again hope to get to the end of experimentation in anything."

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**25 Years**

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Bishop Kearne sent by Family Emmett J. Schn chairman of the moderators and be recognized Chairman Urban Cochairman Frephy of the K. of committee. Fat J. Donnelly is pres and chaplain Council, K. of C.

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