

Ecumenical Churches Planned

Columbia, Md. — (RNS) — Catholic and Protestant churches in this new "planned" city will occupy jointly-owned buildings.

This unique ecumenical arrangement was decided upon when the Columbia Cooperative Ministry, representing 13 Protestant denominations and the Archdiocese of Baltimore, proposed in greater detail the projected needs of the city which is expected to have 1,500,000 persons when completed.

The Religious Facilities Corporation, which will hold title to the land and the buildings, was originally established to include the 13 founding denominations, but now has been revised to include Catholics. It ultimately will include Jews.

The present board of directors, comprised of 17 Protestant members, will be expanded to 25, eight of them being Catholics. This is in line with the amount of money each element has committed for loans. The Protestant bodies have committed \$1,750,000, while Catholics have set aside \$820,000 for construction purposes.

The Cooperative Ministry, in turn, has established a body known as the Ecumenical Planning Commission, which will determine the specific needs of the denominations. The Religious Facilities Corporation will be charged with carrying out the programs.

There are now about 500 families in the planned city, which lies about midway between Baltimore and Washington. Technically, it is part of the Baltimore Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, as set up by the Census Bureau, but it is more closely associated with Washington and its suburban complex.

Three congregations already are holding services among the 500 families — all meeting in a community center until religious facilities can be erected. The first center is expected to be completed in 1969.

United Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist congregations have been organized to date. Each, by agreement, bears the name of St. John the Evangelist.

Cooperation Urged in Poland

Warsaw — (RNS) — The leader of a government-supported "progressive" Catholic organization said here that the refusal of Church leaders to cooperate with the government is causing "tensions and uneasiness" among Polish Catholics.

Boleslaw Plasecki, the director of "Pax," made the statement in a speech to the Polish Sejm (Parliament).

"As long as the Church hierarchy in Poland continues to delve in political matters," he said, "the situation of the Church in Poland will remain difficult and the country's progress will also be difficult."

"The Polish hierarchy should abandon their political plotting and concentrate on religion alone."

He called for cooperation between Church and state in promoting "creative efforts toward the advancement of the whole nation and increasing the prestige of Poland throughout the whole world."

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France Will Use Deacons

Paris — (NC) — Joseph Cardinal Lefebvre of Bourges, president of the French bishops' conference, has announced that Pope Paul VI has approved the French bishops' request for a restoration of the permanent diaconate in this country. The approval was contained in a letter sent to Cardinal Lefebvre by Amleto Cardinal Cicognani, papal secretary of state.

France's National Committee on the Diaconate, which has conducted investigations into restoration of the permanent order of deacon for the past 10 years, met at Paris the day the authorization was announced to discuss means of implementing it.

At present, one priest in each diocese instructs candidates for the diaconate. There are presently 150 French candidates for the diaconate. Several of these are well enough prepared to be ordained within the next few months.

It is expected that the training period for future deacons will be three years long for young candidates and somewhat shorter for older candidates, whether they are celibate or married. Under present regulations, unmarried men ordained to the diaconate will have to remain celibate; men already

married, however, will be allowed to receive ordination as deacons.

Possible functions of the diaconate include baptizing, distributing the Eucharist, blessing marriages, presiding at funerals, directing common prayer and teaching.

General authorization for the restoration of the diaconate was given to the world's episcopal conferences by the decrees of the Second Vatican Council. France is the first European country to receive the permission, although preparation of candidates for the diaconate is already underway in several African and Latin American nations.

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Bishops In Pasto

Washington — (NC) — Writing in response to the needs of the hour, the nation's Catholic bishops yesterday (Jan. 1) released a collective pastoral letter, a long close look at the life and development of the American Church in the light of the Second Vatican Council.

The pastoral, "The Church in Our Day," brings to the Church in the United States the insights of the council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. Prepared by a committee working under the direction of Pittsburgh's Bishop John J. Wright and ratified by the members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the 25,000-word document is divided into two chapters.

Chapter I analyzes the mystery of the Church, describing the nature of the Church as a unified community and discussing the images by which the Church is known in the world.

Chapter II of the document speaks of the characteristics of the whole Church and goes on to define the particular roles given the laymen, priests, Religious and Bishops in the life of the Church and in Christ's plan of salvation.

Designed to minister to the needs of souls, the pastoral appears in an age where questions concerning the charismatic and "institutional" elements of the Church are of moment, at a time when the essentials of priestly life and religious dedication are freely discussed, in these days when freedom of conscience and religious authority come often into conversation.

Because of this, Archbishop John F. Dearden of Detroit, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in his forward to the pastoral, explains, "It is thought not only prudent but necessary that the American bishops present the

Huge Grant For 'Project Equality'

New York — (NC) — Project Equality, the national inter-religious program to promote equal employment practices which was originated by the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, has received a \$22,200 grant from the Ford Foundation.

The money will be used to expand Project Equality, which now operates in 12 metropolitan areas. Although it was founded in 1963 by a Catholic organization and received its first support from Catholic dioceses, Project Equality now has the participation of Jewish, Protestant and Orthodox bodies.

More than 18,000 businesses which do business with church organizations — builders, banks, contractors — have pledged cooperation.

The pledge amounts to a promise that equal employment practices will be followed. The firms also submit to a periodic review of their practices. Failure to comply costs the companies their church business.

The Ford Foundation announcement said that although local (Project Equality) programs are funded locally, requests for national staff assistance in starting the program in new areas are far ahead of capacity. Today's grant will provide aid for expanding the program to nationwide scope, after which it is expected to become self-supporting.

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