

Priests' Federation Stresses Individual Dignity

By FATHER ROGER MATZERATH
Special Correspondent

New Orleans—(RNS)—A nationwide convention of 300 delegates representing 130 local councils and 38,000 priests concluded its three-day meeting here with a record number of resolutions which, in substance, would outline the future shape of the Catholic Church.

The National Federation of Priests' Councils was organized on May 20, 1968 out of an awareness of the spirit of responsibility expressed by the Second Vatican Council in which priests share with bishops the work of providing creatively for the pastoral care of the People of God.

The delegates just concluded is the first since the formal establishment of the priests' organization. The average age of the delegates was 43, with 2 per cent under 30 and 4 per cent over 60.

The future of the Church, in the view of NFPC delegates, should reflect a strong concern for the Christian dignity of the person. This concern in the present time was related to a fair and impartial hearing for those priests who have come into conflict with authority.

In a sharply worded resolution the NFPC "deplores the fact that in these times and in this country ecclesiastical penalties and other punishments have been inflicted on priests without a prior fair and impartial hearing."

To help resolve the difficulty the priests at the New Orleans convention asked that the NFPC "call upon the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to appoint a fast finding committee to resolve the current impasse in San Antonio,

3 Laymen Elected Council Officers

To Advise Bishops

Washington — (NC)—Three laymen were elected officers of the newly organized Advisory Council of the United States Catholic Conference at the council's first meeting here this week.

The 50-member body elected Francis X. Kennelly, 42, of Red Bank, N.J., chairman; Charles C. Tildon, 42, of Baltimore, vice chairman and Mrs. John J. Casey, 48, of Midland, Mich., secretary.

The Advisory Council, composed of 20 laymen, 20 priests, nuns and Brothers, and 10 bishops, will advise the U.S. Bishops through its Administrative Board, review USCC operations and initiate proposals for action.

The USCC is the action agency of the Catholic Church in the United States, with responsibility for planning and conducting programs in social, economic, educational and public affairs.

Kennelly is a Jersey City lawyer, vice-chairman of the Trenton Diocesan Pastoral Council, and a former municipal court judge.

Tildon is associate administrator of Providence Hospital in Baltimore, chairman of the Baltimore Archdiocesan Urban Commission and a board member of the Baltimore Urban League.

Mrs. Casey is a director of the Michigan Catholic Conference and president of the Central Michigan Educational Television Council.



FATHER O'MALLEY

Washington and elsewhere.

Part of the future of the Church will entail a resolution...

of the controversy over optional celibacy for priests. Facing this difficulty, the House of Delegates called for further studies on the "pastoral witness of services of both a celibate and married clergy in the Church."

At present the process of the resignation of priests from the ministry resembles a closely guarded and secret trial which has overtones of guilt. The delegates felt that the present procedures are not in the best interests of the Church and therefore resolved that they should result not only in a complete release from the obstructions of the priestly life and

ministry, but also guarantee honorable integration into the community of the Church."

In other actions the New Orleans convention of the House of Delegates of the NFPC, unanimously re-elected 36-year-old Fr. Patrick O'Malley, a priest of the archdiocese of Chicago, moved the headquarters of the NFPC from Chicago to Washington, D.C., those San Diego for next year's convention.

The Social Action Committee, one of the five standing committees established to assist the Executive Board of the NFPC, introduced resolutions for discussion and adoption by the delegates in 10 areas touching on major concerns of social action.

Noting that in affluent America more than 27 million people live below the poverty level — that for many of these people hunger, disease, bad housing, poor education, and discrimination make up their life style, the delegates urged aid campaigns be conducted to help the People of God to understand the demands of Christian conscience in the field of welfare and poverty on the legislative and administrative level."

Priests attending the convention also resolved that Congress immediately pass legislation that would attack the "incredible phenomenon of hunger in our land."

The delegates recognized that communities across the country are demanding their rights in policy-making regarding education, welfare, housing, health and those programs that directly affect their lives. In the light of this view, the delegates request that "each member council initiate a program to train priests, religious and laymen in community organizations."

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