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Houston Conference

U.S. Bishops Meet, Air Timely Issues

Houston — (NC) — Vocations, liturgy, education, marriage cases and clergy disputes were among the varied subjects discussed here by more than 200 U.S. Bishops gathered for their semiannual meeting which closed yesterday.

Keynote addresses on Tuesday and Wednesday by Cardinal-designate John F. Dearden, Archbishop of Detroit, and John J. Wright, Bishop of Pittsburgh, sketched the general picture of national ecclesiastical situation.

(Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Auxiliary Bishops Dennis W. Hickey and John E. McCaffery attended the meeting, held in the Astro-World Hotel. They returned to Rochester Thursday night.

Daily sessions extending from 9:30 a.m. to noon and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. permitted reports from standing committees followed by informal discussion.

For the first time in the history of the bishops' gatherings 50 news

media representatives were invited into the meeting for the opening addresses. A panel of Bishops representing the entire body submitted to press-questioning after each session.

Archbishop Dearden, speaking on "Directions in the Church in the U.S.," urged the bishops to encourage change in the Church and to seek ways of involving many of the laity in decision-making process.

He said: "In the Church as in other institutions, it is one of the realities of our times that if authority is to retain its credibility, it must function in a manner different from that of the past."

Pleading for patience and openness in meeting the needs of "the persons who form the community that is the Church," the Cardinal-designate said: "Their anguish and their concern are ours. If the tone is strident or complaining, if the words are rude or demanding, somehow we must pierce through the trappings to the reality that underlies them."

Blaine Amendment Still Hot Legislative Topic

(Where to write, Page 2)

Albany — Attempts to reach citizens and lawmakers on pending abortion legislation — expected to be debated in the State Assembly this week — have served somewhat to defer Catholic concern for other bills before the legislators — particularly those on repeal of the so-called Blaine Amendment and on financial aid to private education.

A spokesman for the New York State Catholic Committee said here Wednesday that even if a bill to loosen the present state abortion law were to be voted in the Assembly, it was expected to face much stiffer opposition in the Senate.

Legislators are aiming for adjournment by the end of next week. This would seem to allow little time for lengthy debate or action on several other bills of interest to Catholics.

Primarily among them is the Ranso-Ferry bill to repeal the Blaine Amendment. Its repeal would allow the state to vote some measure of aid to private schools. To become effective, the repeal must be passed by two legislatures and then would be submitted to a voter referendum in November, 1971.

Repeal proponents were hoping that the current legislature would take at least the first step in what will be a lengthy process.

The bill calls for repeal of the Blaine language and substitution of the language of the First Amendment to the U.S. constitution.

Other bills which have been introduced this session include:

• The Marchi-Gallagher bill asking up to \$100 tuition payment for pupils in nonpublic schools in grades kindergarten through 12.

• The Lewis bill calling for change in the law to permit dual enrollment (common in many states but forbidden in New York).

• The Ferrall bill extending the present textbook loan law to grades 4 through 12 (presently 7 through 12) in science, mathematics, etc., and making appropriate changes in grades 1-3.

The state's Catholic Committee urged citizens to contact their legislators on the abortion and education bills.

Catholic U. Decision Not On Doctrine

Washington — (NC) — The Faculty Board of Inquiry which exonerated 21 Catholic University of America faculty members who were charged with engaging in unprofessional conduct by their public protest against Pope Paul's birth control encyclical did not pass judgment on the doctrinal merits of the professors' views on artificial contraception.

The clearance did not directly deal with the moral issue of birth control or papal authority.

The inquiry board's statement, transmitted this week to the trustees of the University, unanimously recommended that the university recognize that the July 30, 1968 statement was "a responsible theological dissent adequately supported by theological scholarship."

It contended that "the actions of the professors in composing, issuing and disseminating this statement did not violate the professors' commitments to the university."

The inquiry into the statement of dissent originated at Catholic University and eventually signed by some 1,000 scholars in the fields of theology and philosophy, was initiated in September by members of the board of trustees, including Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle of Washington, the university chancellor.

Controversy over the professors' statement has centered on such sentences as these: "It is a common teaching in the Church that Catholics may dissent from the authoritative, non-infallible teachings of the magisterium when sufficient reasons for so doing exist."

"Therefore, as Roman Catholic theologians, conscious of our duty and our limitations, we conclude according to their conscience that artificial contraception in some circumstances is permissible and indeed necessary to preserve and foster the values and the sacredness of marriage."

The University's trustees and, particularly, Cardinal O'Boyle as the Archbishop of Washington as well as chancellor of the school, had strongly objected to the position of the 21 professors as being contrary to the papal encyclical and the teaching authority of the Church.

The trustees had threatened the signers with suspension from their jobs just before the seven-month inquiry by a specially formed Faculty Board was ordered.



Vocation Sunday Is April 20 In Diocese

Two seminarians walk from chapel to their classrooms on the grounds of St. Bernard's Seminary.

Pope Issues Call For 'Stout Souls'

Following are excerpts of a letter from Pope Paul VI sent to all Bishops of the world designating Sunday, April 20, as "World Day of Prayer for Vocations". The Holy Father calls the need for promoting vocations "a most grave problem" which must be borne by families, parish priests and educators, as well as Bishops.

Celebration of the sixth World Day of Prayer for Vocations on April 20, second Sunday after Easter, puts on our lips and in our heart an anxious, imploring, trusting invitation to the entire Church to implore from the goodness of the Lord the numerous and holy priests and Sisters required today by the needs of His Mystical Body.

The figure, gentle and heroic, of the Good Shepherd, whom the Roman Liturgy presents with a stimulating wealth of meanings on the Sunday chosen for celebration of the "Day," gives it a special point of reference, for reflection on the part of priests, for the generosity of those called, and for prayer by the entire community of the faithful.

The vast horizon of apostolic works, which on all fronts of today's world are engaged in renewing the presence and action of Christ and which often are compelled to languish because of the lack of forces more adequate and better portioned to the increasing needs of souls, brings everyone to understand the urgency and, we might say, the moving nature of the problem of vocations.

This is a most grave problem, among all others. And it is so because it is a problem of men who in the priesthood are consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament, partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator.

This is a problem of young men and women who may know how to escape from conformism to a hedonistic emptiness and to a thoughtless and sterile opposition, and offer themselves to Christ Jesus with the unequalled strength of their whole spiritual freshness, in order to become servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

However, it is also and principally a problem of truly Christian families in whose field — as it is taught by the great family tradition that has given the Church many saints — genuine vocations, male and female, are sprouting buds; their first blossoming is protected while the splendid fruit is brought to maturity and, increased a hundredfold by the state of grace, will rebound to the benefit of all the People of God.

We turn to you, bishops and brothers in the Church of God. The full measure of the Christian life of the communities entrusted to you, rests in the number and quality of those who consecrate themselves irrevocably.

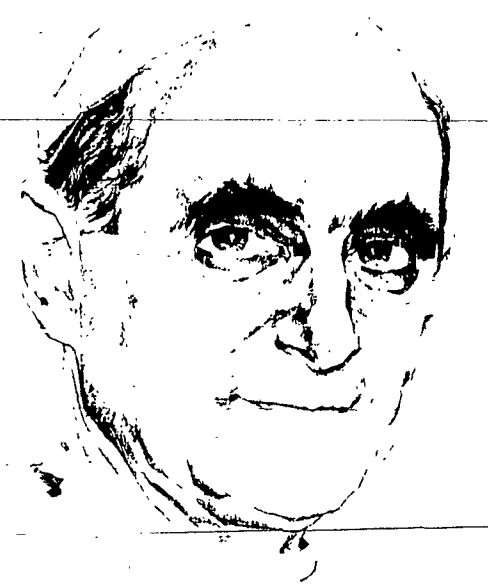
Therefore, look after your seminarians with anxious vigilance, that they may be shrines of prayer, schools of

sanctity and of doctrine, a training ground for stout souls, not changeable at the blowing of every wind, but ready and willing to pledge themselves for the holy cause.

We turn to you, priests, as the first and irreplaceable collaborators of the bishops in this great mission, in order that "by the ministry of the word and by the personal testimony of a life radiant with the spirit of service" you may make the faithful understand the excellence and necessity of the priesthood.

We turn to the magnificent ranks of Catholic educators, to teachers and instructors of every kind, in order that they may know how to cultivate, with kind discretion — at the same time being solicitous for the future welfare of the Church — the buds which will develop in the souls of the most generous and perceptive students.

We turn to families, to Christian spouses, and we repeat to them the moving exhortation of our predecessors



... We implore you, in God's name, do not then, by cruel and egotistical gesture shut off in a soul the access and hearing of the divine call."

The soul of the youth of today is perhaps better adapted and disposed to receive this imponderable call, because young people are thirsting the more for what is absolute, for generosity and authenticity.

The youth of today, indeed the great majority, do not want words, but facts; they want to make payment in person, they want to build a new world.



Counseling is one spur to vocations. See story, other picture, Page 7.

Bishop's Letter on Vocation to the Priesthood

My dear Young Men:

We have few vocations to the priesthood in the diocese, as you well know. Sociologists have given many reasons for this decline, such as, you have too much money, or you are too rebellious against the past, etc. I am much more concerned over the positive side of vocations, and beg you to reflect with me on the heart of this problem.

There is little difference between the grace of conversion and the grace of vocation, except the latter is much more "specific and perfect."

May I tell you how vocation works in you:

1. Vocation begins with a sense of duality. Someone seems to be standing opposite you, challenging you, creating within you a discontent, reproving you in wrong, approving you when right. You may feel sometimes like Paul when the Lord said, "Why do you persecute Me?"; at other times, you may hear a summons so confused, so indistinct that, like Samuel, you may believe it to be the voice of a man rather than the voice of God. In moments of satiety, and fed-up-ness and self-disgust, it seems as if the Finger of God was stirring your soul, saying: "This is not the way. You hurt, don't you, just as you would if you had a broken bone?" When you begin to rationalize evil, ridicule faith, neglect prayer, miss Mass, you hear that Voice inside saying: "Oh! you know you are suiting the way you think to the way you live, and this is not honest."

But at other times, this sense of duality gives you moments of ineffable peace and repose, particularly when you have gone out of your way to help a neighbor, or make a retreat or a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. That Someone inside you is Christ saying: "Naught contents you, who contents not Me."

2. After this experience of a counter-Person in you approving good and reproving badness, there comes the second state of vocation: Interiority. The longest journey in the whole world is the journey inside yourself. The vocation up to this point is only a Voice: "You must be called by God." Interiority is listening to the call, the sifting of the Ego from the Voice, noise from the summons, the flesh from the spirit. The Voice is like seed falling on the soil; interiority is the absorption of that seed into the depths that it may fructify. The call alone is the unexamined life; interiority is the encounter with or the response to its call.

It is at this point that vocations break down, as it is here also that souls often reject grace. Many psychoses and neuroses result from a refusal to face up to the fact that one is a sinner and needs forgiveness. Lady Macbeth washed her hands instead of her soul.

Similarly, the young man who hears the whisper of a vocation — and that is all it is at this point — may allow it to be drowned by clamor, or hyperactivity. Scripture says: "Be still and know that I am God." Much quiet and meditation is necessary at this point, for only during moments of silence does Christ reveal us to ourselves. If you take a piece of glass and hold it up, you can see the stars through it; if you silver one side of it, you can see only yourself. Once you become transparent before that Voice, your calling will be revealed.

3. The third state is testing. Here one must decide whether the Voice we listened to in quiet and peace is summoning one to sanctity in general, or to be a dispenser of sanctity and an ambassador of that Voice to the Church, that is, the priesthood. St. Paul heard the Voice on the way to Damascus, practiced interiority in Arabia for two years, and finally tested his calling with Barnabas and the Apostles in Jerusalem who said that he was called to be an Apostle to the Gentiles.

The testing is done through consultation with a vocation director who will examine your motivations, help you count the costs, determine whether you are giving priority to service of the world or priority to Christ, and through Him service to the world. You will then be not like a sick person who goes to a doctor, but as a healthy one who goes to have a "check-up."

Many more of you have vocations than ever fructify. But this is something you cannot work out by yourself. Fortunately, the diocese is blessed by having a vocation director of the first magnitude, a deeply spiritual priest, a wise counselor, a patient listener, and a tester of whether the spirit be of God or the world. He is Father Lawrence Murphy of Becket Hall.

May I ask that you telephone him (716-586-4470). He will see you personally. In the meantime, we will pray to the Lord of the Harvest that He may "drive in" vocations to our young, and make us a diocese of holy priests.

Your Servant in Christ,

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