

Progress Seen in Resolving Mixed Marriage Issues

At their meeting in Houston, the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops discussed a report outlining ways in which the Church's handling of mixed marriages could be made significantly more acceptable to members of other churches.

The issue with the most ecumenical overtones is that of mixed marriage, a perennial source of friction between the Catholic Church and other churches. A more liberalized approach to mixed marriages since Vatican II has been widely acclaimed by non-Catholic religious leaders, though many have called for still more revisions.

One suggested modification was a call for a change of terminology in discussing the subject.

A more positive approach would be reflected, it was said, if the term "ecumenical marriage" were substituted for the expressions "mixed marriage" and "interfaith marriage" presently in use.

Such a change of terminology,

they added, would indicate and reinforce more favorable attitudes toward marriages between persons of different religions. Persons entering an "ecumenical marriage" should do so in a spirit of dialogue rather than one of dispute and should receive counseling, some college chaplains urged.

While non-Catholic religious leaders have been particularly vocal in their criticism of various Catholic regulations on mixed marriage, the need for change has also been stressed by many Catholics, including bishops as well as priests and married couples.

One of the most sweeping sets of recommendations for a change was made last year by a group of priests from several North Central states in a resolution presented to the Canon Law Society of America.

The priests, who represented their own diocesan priests' councils, said that the traditional promises on the religious education of the children should be dropped entirely.

They also called for the elimination or re-evaluation of various canonical impediments to mixed marriage. Perhaps their most radical proposal was that the local bishop should be authorized to dispense couples from the requirement that a priest and two witnesses be present at their marriage.

The latest official Catholic gesture has been the issuing of a new rite specially designed for mixed marriages which will go into effect on July 1.

Official changes, though evidently not uniformly applied, have been striking. These include permission for the use of a Protestant rather than a Catholic church for the ceremony and the participation of a Protestant minister in the rite.

The change that has probably affected most mixed marriages has been the authors' recommendation that the traditional promises be given orally rather than in a written, signed statement. Still these promises, most notably the one requiring that the children be educated as Catholics, remain the chief source of disagreement in relation to mixed marriages.

Examining actual practice in this area throughout the United

Banquet to Honor Junior Achievers

Father Charles J. Lavery CSB, president of St. John Fisher College, will be the featured speaker at the first annual Future Unlimited Banquet of the Junior Achievement Program of Rochester, May 16 at the Chamber of Commerce Building.

More than 500 business leaders, educators, parents and advisors will attend to honor 520 achievers from 16 area high schools who have operated capsule-size corporations as part of the program.

Highlights of the evening will be the presentation of Officer of the Year, Company of the Year and individual awards as well as scholarship awards.

Junior Achievement is completing its first year in Rochester, nationally it has 150,000 students, 600 centers in 366 communities.

2 Elected Officers Of French Club at St. John Fisher

A senior and a sophomore at St. John Fisher College have been elected president and vice president of the college's French Club for next year.

Angelo D. Bianchi, 27, son of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony F. Bianchi, 11 North Hollow Rd., Greece, will head the 40-member club.

Bianchi, a graduate of Hilton High School, is a Spanish major at college. He is past vice president of the Spanish Club and a member of the varsity soccer team. He served for seven years in the Navy. An Aviation Storekeeper 2/C, Bianchi was a specialist in logistic support.

Vice president of the French Club will be Eric S. Neill, 17, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Neill, 25 Hoyt Pl., Rochester.

A graduate of East High School, Neill is a French-German major. He is a member of the varsity soccer team, and has traveled and studied in France, Spain and Morocco.

States, Father John Catoir of the Paterson, N.J. diocese, studied the forms used in more than 100 dioceses. Many dioceses are demanding more than they should at present and some are demanding more than was envisioned in the original 1917 Code of Canon Law.

Among these "excessive" requirements, Father Catoir cited:

- Promises never to practice birth control, "a moral question that was never envisaged by canon law as a matter to be included," he noted.

- Clauses which implicitly question the good will and sincerity of the non-Catholic party by setting up provisions for guardians if there is a later dispute.

- Requirements which go beyond the Church's simple stipulation that the children be educated in the Catholic faith. These included demands that the child be educated "solely" in the Catholic faith or that he be sent to Catholic schools.

- Imposition on the Catholic party of a duty to try to convert the non-Catholic party.

The priest stressed the importance of respecting the conscience of the non-Catholic party in a mixed marriage and suggested two forms, presently used in some dioceses, which show such respect. In one of these forms, the Catholic party pledges (orally or in writing) to "share my faith" with children of the marriage "by providing for their Catholic baptism and proper religious education."

"By my word and example,"

the Catholic parent pledges, "I will also teach them to fully respect the faith of my non-Catholic spouse."

In this form, the non-Catholic partner expresses understanding of the Catholic partner's religious obligations and promises "that I will in no way impede" their fulfillment.

The other form, also in accord with recent Vatican regulations, requires a promise only from the Catholic party as follows: "We have discussed our religious beliefs and practices. We intend to be faithful to one another until death and we intend a marriage which is permanent."

"We respect the beliefs and practices of one another, even though we recognize areas of disagreement. We have agreed that any children who may be born of our marriage will be baptized and educated in the Catholic faith."

The committee's recommendations, if past treatment of such documents is any indication, will be studied by the bishops and their advisors and acted upon at a later meeting, quite probably the next national meeting in November. Unlike

many of the bishops' past decisions — the one on simplifying marriage court procedures, for example — there seems to be nothing in this one that will require transmission to Rome for approval.

It is possible, therefore, that before the end of the year a significant gap may be closed between Catholic theory and practice on mixed marriages. This, in turn, will undoubtedly ease — though it will not entirely eliminate — interreligious friction on this touchy subject.

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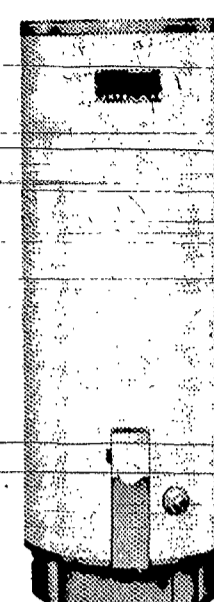
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