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When 250 Bishops Meet... a First-Hand Report

By FATHER RICHARD TORMEY

The first sight of some 250 Bishops gathered in one room is not very startling. But last Monday morning in Washington I was fascinated by a close view of the U.S. hierarchy assembling for their annual meeting.

Unmattered and vested in black suits, the shepherds of the U.S. Church, ranked at green-covered tables, look much like conventioners at annual meetings of the A.M.A. or the wholesale food industry.

Appearing to average about 60 years of age, predominantly grey-haired, less than half of them showing the pectoral chain of their rank, the Bishops had a happy air of men at an annual reunion.

But having seen the agenda of their meeting, I expected this was going to be different from the conventions

usually held under the ballroom chandeliers of the Washington Statler-Hilton Hotel.

These men were set for a week of long talk-sessions on issues vital to the welfare of nearly 48 million Catholics. They were to discuss such subjects as poverty and racial tensions, the formation of seminarians, the new Mass ritual, celibacy and clergy troubles.

And there were rumors that a coalition of dissident groups of priests and laymen was pressuring the Bishops for consideration of 41 priorities on a "People's Agenda," including U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

Because the Diocese of Rochester had four Bishop-representatives there, (Archbishop Sheen, Bishop-designate Hogan, Auxiliary Bishops Hickey and McCafferty) I joined the press corps

to cover the first two days of their deliberations.

Before the opening prayer, Archbishop Sheen helped Bishop-designate Hogan break the ice by introducing him to many new colleagues. Other Bishops reading his name, presented themselves to the newest member of the prelates group.

It was easy to identify men like Cardinals McIntyre, Dearden, Cooke, Cody and Krol from their news pictures. Familiar like Bishops Casey of Paterson, Cunningham of Syracuse and Harper from the Virgin Islands (who frequently confirmed in our diocese back in '65-'66) were gracious with greetings.

Before the opening address by John Cardinal Dearden of Detroit, president of the Bishops' Conference, reporters, photographers and TV

newspictures men roamed the assembly room freely.

But after his brief "State of the Church" speech the press were gently told to "remove your equipment and yourselves" from the room and for the next four days all deliberations were held behind closed and guarded doors. Sessions ran from 9:30 until noon, from 2 p.m. until 5.

Each day the press group of nearly 50 men and women, from secular and religious publications, met at noon and 5 o'clock to get a briefing of what had been said in the session just finished and a chance to question a panel of half-dozen Bishops who had played some role in that meeting.

Reporters got hand-outs of all the speeches and summaries of the major points made in the closed sessions.

But shut out of the assembly, they plunged into the group-interviews, working from the premise that the filtered version of what transpired in executive session wasn't the most desirable version for their readers.

In one press conference the press haggled over how the Bishops' national budget is established; in another they asked piercing questions about an 80-page document entitled "Program of Priestly Formation." They wanted detailed facts and they sifted the words looking for subjective meanings.

Some highlight of the four press conferences I attended:

The reporters were excited about the "historic first speech by an ordinary priest" before the Bishops' plenary gathering on Monday afternoon.

Told that Father Patrick O'Malley, president of the National Federation of Priests' Councils, had urged the Bishops to make a "radical change in the decision-making process of the Church" by bringing diocesan priests to the next meeting of the hierarchy as full voting members, reporters quizzed him carefully when he came to the press conference.

Husky and handsome, with a confident voice and a chin like Bert Lancaster's, Father O'Malley made as good an impression on the press as he did before the Bishops. (Next morning, The New York Times put reporter Edward Fiske's story on Father O'Malley on Page 1.)

Speaking for the federation of 118 diocesan priests' councils representing 35,000 of the nation's approximately 55,000 priests, the Chicago

(Continued on Page 2)

Abp. Sheen Preaches at Peace Mass

The following are excerpts from the homily delivered by Archbishop Sheen at Washington's National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception during a pontifical Mass for Peace last Monday evening. A capacity audience, including more than 100 U.S. Cardinals and Bishops, attended.

Our theme is peace. But we may not forget that immediately after telling His disciples: "you must have peace in me," Our Lord added, "in the world you will have trouble." (John 16/33)

Let us not live under the delusion that the cessation of the Vietnam War will bring peace. Peace is never the same as the cessation of hostilities. Shalom is not the absence of trouble or the stopping of a war.

The choice before the Church is not whether to believe in violence or not. It is rather which kind of violence. Violence is of two kinds: one is violence towards others, the other is violence to self.

One uses the sword to swing outward, like the sword of Peter, who as a swordsman, proved himself an excellent fisherman, for all he could do was to hack off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Action is often a poor substitute for prayer.

The Lord still says to those who use physical violence to prove themselves: "Put your sword back into its scabbard." (Matt. 26/52)

The other kind of violence is the sword that our Lord brought, the sword that is directed inward cutting out our vices.

The first sword is lethal and wounding; the second is healing and enriching.

Could it not be that as we Christians dropped inner violence, which is another name for discipline and mortification, that the world picked it up and turned it against us? As we drop the rosary, the hippies put beads around their necks; as nuns drop the long habits, the young women wear mini-skirts, and as we drop dying to self, or mortification, youth mortifies and goes violence to those who differ with them.

There is such a thing as "the violence of love"; it is not based on terror. (Continued on Page 6)



The Apollo 13 astronauts are in obvious good humor as they take a break from their training at the Kennedy Space Center. The astronauts are, from left, Charles "Pete" Conrad, Jr., Richard F. Gordon Jr., and Alan L. Bean. (Religious News Service)

From Altar Boy to Astronaut

Seattle, Wash. — (NC) — The distance between a sleepy-eyed altar boy mumbling an "et cum spiritu tuo" in an area rural church on a raw, cold morning and a clear-cut competent, crisp young astronaut giving a brisk "A-OK. All systems go" in warm, Florida sunshine is great, both in time and space.

But the gap will be a thing of the past with the Apollo 12 blast-off from Cocoa Beach, Fla., in the flight that is calculated to thrust man to the moon for the second time.

One of the three men in that Apollo capsule is Richard F. Gordon Jr., erstwhile altar boy at St. Peter's Church in Suquamish, Wash.

Gordon was born here, son of Richard and Angela Gordon. He was baptized in St. Alphonsus Church and his godmother, Mrs. Rose Preston, of Lynwood, Wash., is in the family party which flew to Cocoa Beach to witness the blast-off.

The astronaut's father, who died in 1963, was an operating engineer. He moved the family to rural Poulsbo, while young Richard was attending school. Richard and his brother William were the only two of the five Gordon children who did not attend parochial school; such facilities were nonexistent at that time in Poulsbo.

But Richard and William covered the five miles between their home and St. Peter's Church on their bicycles as often as possible, frequently rising at 5:30 a.m. They would race, and Father John Concannon, S.J., then on Seattle University's faculty, who said Mass at St. Peter's, would reward the winner by allowing him to be acolyte.

Another priest who greatly influenced the astronaut, Mrs. Gordon said, was Father "Chris" McDonald, S.J., now attached to Blessed Sacrament Church, Hollywood, Calif., but formerly of Seattle Prep.

The impact of this priest's personality and spirituality on young Richard was so great that for a while he thought he might have a vocation to the priesthood, his mother said.

Gordon was an outstanding and popular student at the University of Washington. He accumulated 17 hours credit in excess of what was required for his degree. He was elected president of his fraternity, was active in many campus activities. He married the former Barbara Jean Field, of Wildbey Island, Wash., and the couple now have six children.

The astronaut's mother has been teaching in the Seattle archdiocesan schools for the past 16 years. She is teaching fifth grade at St. Matthew's school here. She and members of her family, plus several "close friends, after watching the Cocoa Beach take-off, will remain until after the splash-down.

"We will all spend Thanksgiving together and I'm looking forward to it," she said.

U.S. Bishops Tackle Sociological Issues

(FROM COURIER-JOURNAL SOURCES)

Washington — The nation's Catholic Bishops, halfway through their week-long semiannual meeting here, had voted to set up a Committee for the Nomination of Bishops, approved the request of black

clergymen to open a national office serving the special needs of black Catholics, seriously studied reports of a task force on national urban poverty and its relation to the Church, listened to requests for broader consideration of the unique problems of Spanish-speaking Americans.

They also had argued a proposed statement on celibacy and sent to the Vatican an approved and much-debated "Program for Priestly Formation" which will become binding on all U.S. seminaries if the Holy See accepts it.

Still ahead on a crowded program which will not close until Friday noon, were discussions on arbitration, mediation and due process. In cases of clerical disputes, the revised Mass liturgy expected to be authorized for next Palm Sunday, the new policy statement on celibacy and specific programs urging diocesan efforts as well as a national commitment on poverty problems.

The president of the National Federation of Priests' Councils became the first priest ever to address the hierarchy of the United States on priestly problems.

Father Patrick O'Malley of Chicago, at a closed session of the Conference late Monday told the prelates that priests in NFPC "are asking for a share not only in the implementing

of programs for the good of the Church, but in the planning and decision making for that Church."

Through Father O'Malley, the NFPC has asked the bishops to bring the elected head of their senate, or a priest elected at large from the diocese to the April, 1970, meeting of the bishops in San Francisco.

The bishops have been advised by their liaison committee to reject the proposal that they bring priests to their next meeting.

He suggested five specific projects the bishops and priests groups could collaborate on:

- Continuing education programs for priests.
- Develop and innovate steps toward a new and more vital spiritual life.
- Training in personnel practices for bishops and priests.
- A study of the value of celibacy.

"Many priests," said Father O'Malley, "feel that they are only needed when it comes time to implement — never to plan or to make decisions. The syndrome of 'merely consultative' is not only contributing to the cynicism of priests, but it is damaging."

(Continued on Page 2)

Seminary Amalgamation Advocated by Bishops

Washington — (NC)—U.S. seminaries will be amalgamated and students will get a more creative training for the priesthood if the Vatican accepts a "Program of Priestly Formation" approved this week by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting here.

Acceptance of separate sections of the 80-page document had been voted at NCCB meetings in 1967, 1968 and April of this year. The bishops' vote this week marks their final approval of the total program which now goes to the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education.

There are about 380 Catholic seminaries in the United States enrolling approximately 35,000 students.

Formation for priestly service, it says, "must continually look to the needs of both the Church and of the world, and must not proceed in isolation from either."

The Program of Priestly Formation endorses celibacy for priests and says that "the seminarian who finds himself unable to sustain celibate chastity can see an indication that he should serve God's people in another way."

The priest's celibacy will be clearly pastoral, involving a gift at the heart of his identity, offered to the enterprise of the Lord saving His people.

Where study reveals that because of size, unsatisfactory facilities, inadequate faculty or financing, seminaries are unable to maintain suitable programs, amalgamation of facilities was recommended.

The document stresses the need in priestly formation of "stimulating interaction" between pastoral training and theological education.

Among the activities it recommends is a field education program coordinated with the seminary's academic program. The field education program, it says, "aims to provide to the candidate for the pastoral ministry an opportunity for personal involvement in and practical exercise of the apostolate" in such areas as catechesis, Catholic charities, hospitals, community organizations, agencies for the handicapped and other fields.

The document also recommends that candidates for the priesthood who have been ordained as deacons be given a "deacon internship" during which they would be assigned to pastoral work for a year or more before requesting priesthood.

A First for Seminary

Sister a Fulltime Student at St. Bernard's

By SR. M. PIUS KEOUGH

For the first time in its 76-year history, St. Bernard's Seminary opened its doors this year to a fulltime woman student — Sister Mary Gratia of the Sisters of Mercy. Although a few women students have pursued a single course at the Seminary on occasion, this is the first woman to matriculate, taking the same curriculum as the ordinary seminarian.

Sister Mary Gratia is no ordinary first-year student. She brings a wealth of background by virtue of her own previous studies and experience. She is a linguist with a B.A. from Nazareth College and an M.A. from Middlebury College in Vermont — an honor French major in both institutions. She also is fluent in Latin and Spanish and has an extraordinary knowledge of linguistics, having pursued a number of summer and in-service courses; studied Spanish and Arabic at Georgetown University in Washington; enriched her knowledge of the science of language at the University of Rochester and Rivier College in New Hampshire; has traveled abroad both privately and as a chaperone-student; visited the six Sisters of Mercy at the Congregation's Chilean mission and took some introductory work in Hebrew and Greek, along with other courses previously at St. Bernard's.

In addition, she has taught at all levels of education for the Sisters of Mercy: elementary, high school and college. She chaired the Foreign Language Teachers' Association, both as vice-president and president; she

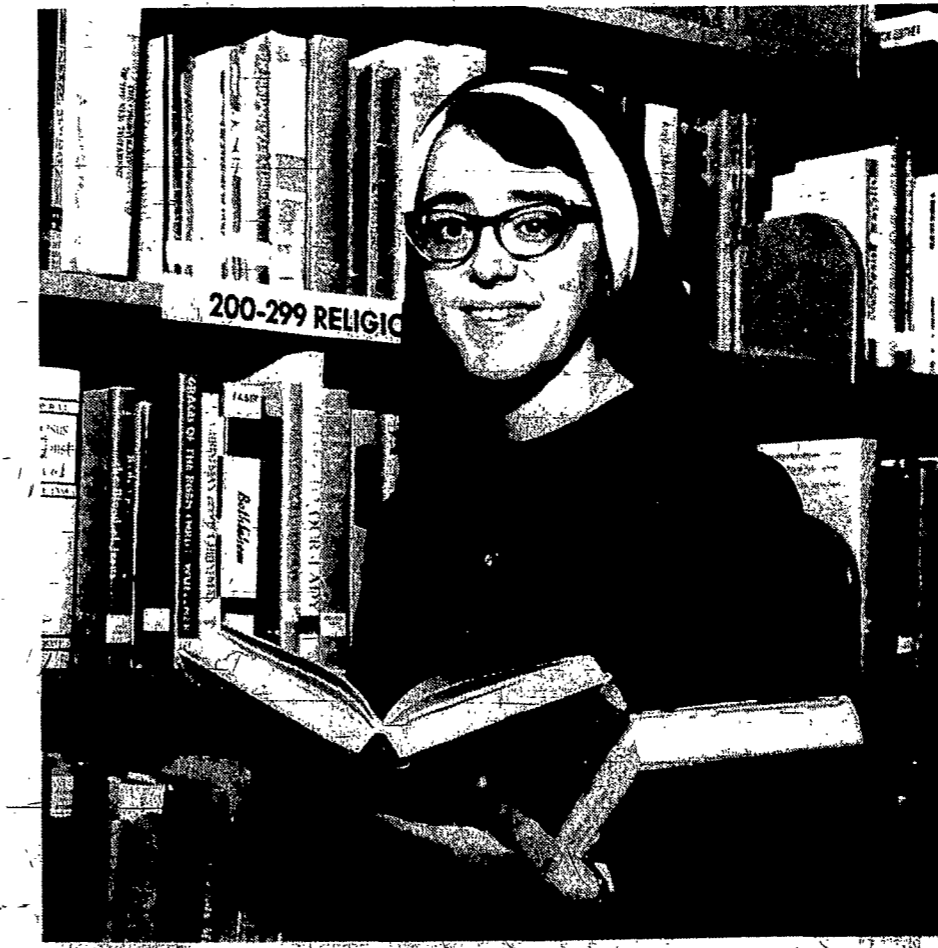
has been a member of the Sisters of Mercy Chapter and was the Congregation's representative to the Diocese's Liturgical Commission. She also is the congregation's representative to the National Federation of the Sisters of Mercy.

Finally, Sister Mary Gratia was one of eight Sisters of Mercy who experimented last summer in a six-week "house of prayer" as that group's liturgist.

Why would a woman with this background begin a seemingly new kind of education after all these years? According to Sister Mary Gratia this will be merely a continuation of a secondary aspect of her training. She has had extensive studies in theology, scripture and liturgy — some formal and much by workshop and reading and this program at St. Bernard's will organize the already known, and fill in the gaps of the unknown.

"Any religious community today could use a good theologian as a consultant," Sister Gratia explained, "and there is a need in any diocese of a theologian with a knowledge of languages to serve the minority groups; this is especially needed in Rochester by the Spanish-speaking Catholics, since only two priests are really proficient in that language."

The reaction by both the administration and students to Sister's presence on campus has been most favorable. According to the seminary's librarian, Father Joseph Castillon, S.J., the students frequently study and talk over problems with Sister



SISTER MARY GRATIA... in a man's world

Mary Gratia. The rector, Father Joseph Brennan, laughingly referred to Sister as "the first priestess," but

more seriously responded that Sister's studying there was enriching for both the students and Sister Mary Gratia.

ON THE INSIDE

Commentary	15
Diocesan	7
Editorial	6
Entertainment	10
Sports	12
News Review	5
Fr. Hempel Reports	9

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