

# Cardinal Suenens and the Next Synod

Vatican City—(RNS)—Leo Joseph Cardinal Suenens, primate of Belgium and leader of the "aggiornamento" forces at the Vatican II, warmed up a somewhat lagging church controversy with a provocative interview in the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*.

He praised the Dutch bishops for providing a "model" of collegiality and co-responsibility, while voicing candid if respectful critical opinion not only of his fellow bishops but also of recent measures taken by Pope Paul VI.

The interview is regarded here, because of Cardinal Suenens' stature and his past campaigns for collegiality, as a virtual battle plan for the next synod of bishops which is expected to be called this autumn

to deal with the status of the priesthood and particularly with celibacy.

Within a few days, Pope Paul himself made a clear allusion to the interview, taking the occasion offered him by the first meeting of the permanent secretariat of the Bishop's Synod elected by the world's bishops. He expressed his "grieved astonishment" at the statements of prelates who speak in a manner "that does not seem to us in keeping with the brotherly style required by collegiality" and who are "merely interpretative of a certain theological opinion."

Just what did Cardinal Suenens say and what parts of his remarks seem to be those criticized by the pontiff?

The bishops at the synod, Cardinal Suenens told his interviewer, should not come ex-

pressing only their personal opinions, and particular charisma, but also as spokesmen for their clergy and laity. For this, it will be necessary for the agenda to be made public early enough to be discussed throughout the world at all levels in the local churches.

He deplored "suppressions" of debate on celibacy and thinks that the Dutch crisis can be resolved only when the bishops of that country have seen their viewpoint discussed both by their fellow bishops and by the world Church community.

Queried about the impasse between Rome and the Dutch, he said, "I see no way of getting out of this situation and of diminishing the growing tension than to allow collegiality and co-responsibility to take its own free course."

The Belgian primate mini-

mized the telegrams of solidarity sent the Pope by bishops and bishops' conferences from all over the world, following the Pope's letter to Cardinal Villot, secretary of state, in which he reaffirmed the status of clerical celibacy.

The bishops who did that, he said, came to the support of the pontifical decision "a priori, out of loyalty and solidarity and no doubt also to a great degree because they share the same point of view and the same fears, if only when thinking of the considerable complexity of any possible revision.

"Hence they sent to Rome statements of adherence and of thanks, whenever the bloc of bishops seemed united." These same telegrams, however, he added, disturbed some clerics and laity because they were sent without consultation with priests and over their heads. "The unanimity of the declarations does not impress them," commented the cardinal, in explaining their reaction, "It appears imposed from the outside by moral pressure."

The Dutch bishops, on the contrary, in dealing with the problems of the "local Church" had, he said, adopted an open attitude by consulting with the people of God over the years in an intensive dialogue. "They have therefore given to their episcopal function," he contended, "the full ecclesial dimension. They are at the heart of their Church. They give an example of a lived co-responsibility. They are entitled to ask other churches to study their problems."

Cardinal Suenens did not express any personal views on the merits of a married clergy, though he did praise the tradition of celibacy. His concern was primarily with the procedural issues facing the Church, particularly in the next synod. "What is at stake is the way of conceiving the government of the Church and the application of certain principles which are at the heart of the Vatican Council."

The bishops, he said, are torn between two exigencies, their loyalty to the supreme authority of the Pope represented in the primacy as against their co-

responsibility for the life of the local churches.

In his talk with Henri Fesquet, religious correspondent of *Le Monde* which was widely picked up in the European press, Cardinal Suenens wanted to interpose his good offices between the Dutch and Rome. From this point of view the Vatican no doubt welcomes his initiative, though he has no longer the ear of Paul VI, for whose elevation to the papacy he was perhaps largely responsible.

Certain expressions used by the cardinal cause surprise. For instance, he speaks of decisions of Pope or bishop without express consultation with the clergy or laity as not "normal." Since this has been the practice of church councils for centuries it is not a convincing line of approach to take scandal at this procedure, least of all to characterize it as abnormal.

Also, Cardinal Suenens was apparently offended when Pope Paul delivered a sermon in St. Mary Major's Basilica during the Bishops' Synod last October, in which he insisted on the current discipline on clerical celibacy.

This reaction by the Belgian primate seems to indicate that in his idea of collegiality the Pope should remain silent and inactive while the great issues are really being debated everywhere around him.

Such papal intervention is described as "moral pressure," whereas it can possibly be argued that this particular intervention, like others, is the Pope's own contribution to the dialogue which, as Cardinal Suenens admits, is still going on.

A Roman observer could easily comment, "It is all right for the Dutch bishops to go through the external motions of 'consulting' the clergy and faithful, only to pat them on the head when it is all over and deciding among themselves what they probably had in mind all along anyway. The Pope cannot indulge in this kind of patronizing masquerade. It is a more honest way of dealing with the people of God to put our cards on the table from the first."

## The Slot Man A Family Affair

By Carmen Viglucci



Begun in 1968, Holy Spirit Church in Penfield is a relatively new parish and has long been a leader in liturgical innovations without going so far as to be thought avant-garde.

Spearheaded by the now deceased Father Joseph Lynch, the church two years ago adopted liturgical practices that were just made general this year.

I have only been to Holy Spirit a handful of times since it was founded but each time it seems I come face-to-face with innovative and imaginative methods.

I'll admit that it's still a little embarrassing for me to hold hands with strangers during the Lord's Prayer but I also have to point out that it is this very barrier that the practice aims to break down in the prospect of closer community.

One of the things I've always appreciated was the passing of the "kiss of peace" throughout the congregation. My initial participation in this practice was again at Holy Spirit.

Two weeks ago I experienced another liturgical first at Holy Spirit as a child was baptized as part of the Mass.

"Something new," I thought (by now you can tell I'm no giant on the liturgy). So I called Father M. Gerard Hafner who directs liturgical practices for Father Joseph Dailey, Holy Spirit pastor.

"Oh, no," he quickly informed me, "we've been having baptism as part of the Mass liturgy since 1968. That was Father Lynch's doing and Father Dailey has carried through with the idea."

Father Hafner explained that it is Holy Spirit's practice not to exclude any optional part of the baptismal rite. Instead, in the interest of time, the Creed is omitted and he reduces the sermon somewhat.

The day I attended, the Mass took 56 minutes, which is average for a High Mass at Holy Spirit.

A procession, accompanied by a hymn, to the baptismal font in the rear of the church began the rite.

There are several options in the rite and Father Hafner leaves it up to parents to choose. In fact whether or not the Baptism is at the Mass or later in the day is also up to

the parents although Father Hafner tries to nudge them toward the Mass.

But as the baby, christened Mary Grace, was initiated into community of God's people, it was especially gratifying to see my own daughter, 5, stand on the pew to get a closer look and to realize that although she has been attending Mass regularly for some time this was one of the few times she was personally involved.

At the conclusion of the rites in the rear of the church the congregation sang a triple Alleluia and the essence of the new liturgy was expressed in the communal participation in a child's baptism.

A further warm touch was added as the family, godparents

and celebrant of the Mass stood together on the altar so that all could get a better look at the new member of the community.

"We try to make it a family affair," Father Hafner explained, "by having members of the same family take part in the Offertory procession or we may have the father do the reading if he wants to."

"One week, we had a baptism and two first Communions from the same family."

Its sense of community is a credit to Holy Spirit and Fathers Dailey and Hafner. The up-to-date sense of liturgy is a tribute to the farsightedness of the church's first pastor, Father Lynch, and in a way is a living memorial to him.

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