

Priesthood to Be Main Topic of Synod

By FATHER LEO J. McFADDEN

Vatican City — The highest ranking advisory body to the Pope will address itself exclusively to the crisis in the modern priesthood when it convenes in the Vatican in the autumn of 1971.

This was the word in Rome as 12 of the 15 members of the secretariat of the Synod of Bishops finished their agenda proposals and discussed them in a friendly, informal audience with Pope Paul VI.

Although the actual agenda was cloaked in an unusual amount of secrecy, NC News learned that the entire agenda

will be given to bishops' conferences around the world for their study and suggestions months before the synod convenes.

It is no secret that the Pope has been vitally interested in the problems of the priesthood.

Father Eugene Schallert, Jesuit sociologist from the University of San Francisco, a specialist in analyzing the modern American priest, was called to the Vatican for consultation four times in the past year by Cardinal Jean Villot, papal secretary of state, and by Archbishop Giovanni Benelli, substitute secretary of state, regarded by many as the Pope's chief adviser.

In addition to those merely studying the problem of the priesthood, the Vatican has

also conferred with psychiatrists and counselors who have been dealing with the alcoholic or emotionally distressed priest.

If admitting a problem exists is the first step in solving it, Pope Paul seems to have taken that step. Addressing the 12-synod secretariat members on Oct. 15, the Pope used many negative words to draw a positive picture: the church has problems.

"Many problems today," he said, "are a source of agitation among the people of God . . . You know them through direct experience and wise mediation. You certainly share in our anxieties and hopes. It is sorrowful to see difficulties and tribulations arise for the Church."

Asked about this seemingly solid recognition of problems by the Pope, Archbishop Marcos McGrath of Panama, a secretariat member, observed:

"Anyone who tries to say the Church does not have a lot of problems is kidding himself. At least the Pope is trying to face them."

Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit, president of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops said: "The Holy Father is doing his best to solve some problem areas of vital concern to the Church by employing a system of collegiality, by going to the bishops and obtaining their best advice. That is what the synod is all about."

If the synod devotes its entire agenda to the problems of the priesthood, the probe will be many faceted, involving much more than just celibacy.

Many contend that the single issue of celibacy epitomizes all that is wrong with the Catholic

priesthood today. Father Schallert's findings belie this.

In a study of 700 priests, half of whom had left the ministry, celibacy was at best a latent reason for leaving. Father Schallert found that frustration with too little or too much change was by far a greater factor.

If the synod is to accomplish its task, it must also look at modern seminary training and evaluate the kind of priest who will lead the Church of tomorrow.

For the past year, the Pope has done his homework on the priesthood, has sought the advice of experts and has con-

sulted with the international body of theologians who themselves had studied the problem in depth.

Very soon now the bishops conferences will be assigned that same study and the stage will be set for the 1971 synod.

In his "friendly, informal but business-like" audience for the secretariat members, Pope Paul literally called out questions to them and got answers shot back from the group.

As one participant put it: "It was almost as if the Pope was asking us how we were doing, how we were gearing up for the job . . . and what progress we were making."

News Analysis

Anglican Prelate to Shun Sydney Ecumenical Rite

Sydney, Australia — (NC) — Sydney's Anglican Archbishop Marcus Loane said he will not accept an invitation to participate in the ecumenical service planned for the visit of Pope Paul VI to this country in November.

The Anglican prelate said "there are questions of truth which must be resolved" before he "can share in common worship or in unfettered fellowship" with the Roman Catholic Church.

NCEA Platform Reflects Shift In Education

Washington — (NC) — The first platform ever issued by the National Catholic Educational Association here shows how things have changed since Catholic education's early days, an NCEA official said.

For one thing, said Father C. Albert Koob, O. Praem., NCEA president, a specific platform was not even necessary before.

"Decisions on Catholic education were made by members of the hierarchy or religious superiors," he said. "When orders were given, everything was carried out as a matter of routine. It was a different way of life than we're accustomed to now."

But as Catholic education grew and developed, administrative procedures changed, new problems arose and new issues were raised. State and federal aid, racial equality, lay involvement, the so-called "knowledge explosion" were discussed with increasing frequency.

NCEA's platform—two years in the making — notes there is "no justification nor need for any education under Catholic auspices that is not recognized by the hallmark of excellence."

"There's been a change of thinking among Catholic educators from a position where it was better to have children in any Catholic school rather than put them in public schools" Father Koob told NC News. "To the modern Catholic, if it isn't quality education, it isn't acceptable."

Discussing school finances, the platform said NCEA "affirms that governmental assistance to nonpublic educational institutions for public services rendered is necessary, proper and in the national interest."

Under professional standards, the platform notes positions of educational leadership should be filled "only on the basis of merit, ability and experience."

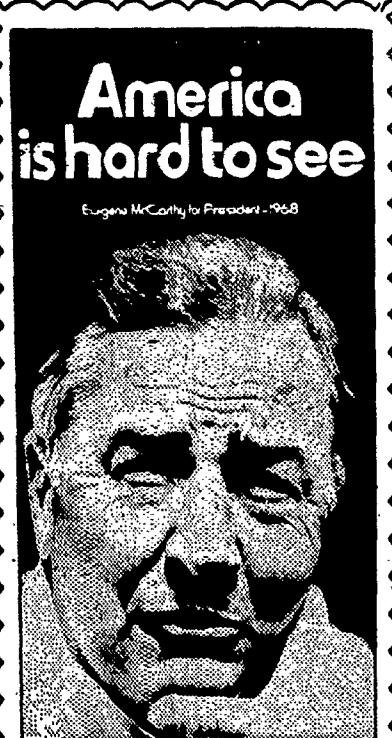
A spokesman for the Anglican archdiocese of Sydney, Canon D. W. Robinson, said that Archbishop Loane had not yet received an invitation to the Ecumenical Service of Prayer for Christian Unity scheduled for Dec. 2, but, he added, the archbishop does not intend to attend in any case.

The Catholic Church and the Australian Council of Churches are inviting the heads of member churches and other religious leaders to the service. Other Anglican churchmen have said they will attend.

Archbishop Frank Woods of Melbourne, acting primate of the Anglican Church in Australia, said he had received an invitation and hopes to attend.

"I am pleased that His Holiness the Pope has been glad to join in such a service and I believe the service will be a real contribution to understanding between the Christian churches," Archbishop Woods said.

The Rt. Rev. Fred McKay, moderator general of the Presbyterian Church in Australia, said that although he had not yet been invited he is willing to attend. The president of the Congregational Union of Australia, the Rev. John Bryant, and the president of the New South Wales Methodist Conference, the Rev. W. D. O'Reilly, indicated their willingness to attend.



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