



Shepherd — 1970 Style

Shepherds still tend their sheep in the sparse vegetation of the Judean hills above Bethlehem much as they did on that first Christmas. (RNS).

Pacific Bishops' Agenda Typifies Church's Problems

Sydney — (RNS) — A wide range of topics, many of them typical of those facing the Church around the globe, were discussed at the recent assembly of the Catholic bishops of Australia, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea and the Pacific.

Among themes discussed:

- Bringing Christ to the peoples of the Pacific.
- Assisting the peoples of the Pacific in their human development.
- Youth today: their problems, needs and hopes, and the Christian response through education and formation.
- The priesthood — modern challenges and demands, and its role in today's world.

Bishop John H. M. Rodgers of Tonga set the tone of the discussion on their first topic by pointing out that "to bring Christ to the Peoples of the Pacific" means that "they be brought to accept Him by a personal commitment and embrace Christianity as a way of life extending to every area of human existence."

"In becoming man," the bishop said, "the Son of God identified Himself with the culture into which He was born. So, too, the Church in continuing His redemptive work, must completely identify herself with the various cultures in which she carries the Gospel."

Bishop Rodgers noted various obstacles that militated against this process of identification in the Pacific region.

He cited "the rapid increase in population," and the "lack of land and suitable paid employment" as posing serious problems in the area, and suggested that "the only permanent solution" would seem to lie in "mass migration to other countries well able to receive new citizens."

It was here that the prelate called on the hierarchies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada "and other affluent countries" to protest with a united voice against "the racial discrimination now being practiced by their governments."

On the topic of youth, Bishop Robert F. Rush of Rockhampton, Australia, said, "The bishops, without blinding themselves to the faults of modern youth," are convinced that "young people today are as generous as ever."

"Without always recognizing

it," he said, "modern youth relish a challenge and the greater the challenge thrown at them, the more likely they are to respond."

There was no extended dis-

cussion of the thorny question of mandatory clerical celibacy, but at one point, Bishop Rodgers of Tonga, referring to "very isolated areas" in the Pacific region, suggested the ordination of married men.

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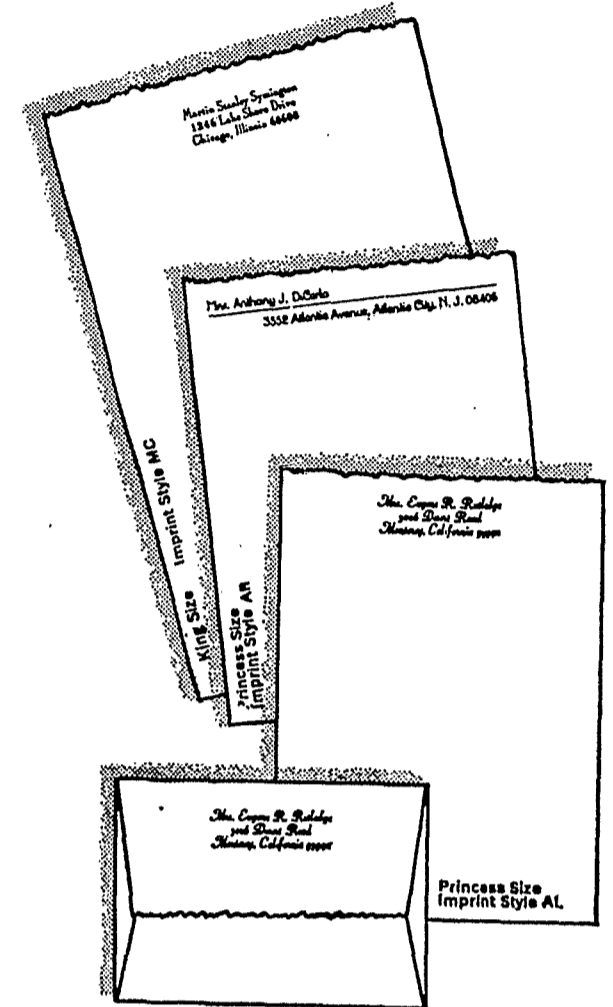
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