

Bishops Covered Wide Range of Topics

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — The nation's Roman Catholic bishops used their five-day semi-annual meeting here to challenge the federal government on war and education, elect new officers, approve an Independence Day liturgy, and vote to open their next meeting to the press and observers.

While all this was going on, they were fending off strong criticism from both progressive and traditionalist Catholic groups, parleying with representatives of the anti-war movement, and tending to a host of housekeeping chores.

Perhaps the most dramatic moments surrounded debate on a resolution which, in effect, called for withdrawal of U.S.

troops from Vietnam as soon as possible and charged that the war in Southeast Asia had gone beyond its just limits.

The meeting involved some 250 Catholic prelates and saw the five-year tenure of Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit as president come to an end.

Elected president for the next three years was Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, succeeding Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit, and Archbishop Leo Byrne of St. Paul-Minneapolis was named to succeed Cardinal Krol as vice-president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference.

The 250 participating bishops approved the formation of a national conference of spiritual directors, taking a cue from the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education which had ear-

lier encouraged some action to foster better formation of seminary spiritual directors.

The prelates also unanimously approved a statement prepared by the USCC's ad hoc committee on state aid, which called on the federal government to implement a policy of "tax credits" permitting tuition rebates on federal income tax.

According to the statement, all parents of elementary and secondary school pupils in private, parochial and public schools would be able to subtract from their total income tax payment an amount equal to one-half the cost of tuition and fees.

In voting to permit press coverage of their next meeting, scheduled for April in Atlanta, the bishops approved a motion which called for admission of "top-flight, qualified and approved members of the working press and communications field" to regular sessions.

The bishops also approved the admission of "auditors" from various Catholic organizations, whose number would be determined later.

In other action, the bishops adopted some 43 "ethical and religious directives for Catholic health facilities," updating a similar statement adopted in 1954. The changes included a preamble and two directives concerned with the transplanting of organs from living and deceased persons.

The directives especially reaffirmed Catholic positions on the immorality of euthanasia (mercy killing), abortion and sterilization. Transplants, under proper conditions, were declared permissible. The preamble pointed out that Catholic-sponsored health facilities, through their directors, have the responsibility to prohibit "those procedures which are morally and spiritually harmful."

In the liturgical field, the bishops approved a special liturgical text for Independence Day and other civic observances and voted to seek Vatican approval for the use, on a provisional basis, of the revised rite for the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick.

There were two major rejections.

Early in the meeting the prelates turned back a proposal for a Vatican restudy of provisions in the Church's Ecumenical Directory prohibiting an "exchange of pulpits" between Catholics and non-Catholic clergy.

In a 152 to 81 vote, the bishops came out against the "pulpit fellowship" proposal made by the NCCB's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. The committee request was not for a change but a new look at provisions governing exchanges.

Also the bishops rejected for the third time a proposal by the NCCB Liturgy Committee urging Masses for "special groups." Although the bishops generally agreed that a liturgy for special groups is needed, they turned down proposed adaptations of the liturgy for "retarded persons, small children, teenagers, and members of religious communities who wish to celebrate in small groups."

Prior to the bishops' vote on the Vietnam resolution, a NCCB committee of three prelates heard the views of representatives of two anti-war groups who urged the NCCB to make a strong statement on the need to end the war in Vietnam.

Shortly thereafter, the bishops adopted and issued the "strongest" resolution they had yet made on the Indo-China war, calling for a "speedy end to the war." They declared that whatever good the U.S. hoped to

achieve in Vietnam "is now outweighed by the destruction of human life and of moral values which it inflicts."

The resolution, passed by a vote of 158 to 36, said the bishops felt a "moral obligation to appeal urgently to our nation's leaders and indeed to the leaders of all nations involved in this tragic conflict to bring the

war to an end with no further delay."

In other business, the NCCB approved a \$9.8 million budget, but rejected any increase in expenditures for the U.S. Catholic Conference. It did not include funds for the National Office of Black Catholics, stating that efforts will be made to seek other funding sources.

Bishop's Letter

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laity, representative of all of you, to collaborate with me in the apostolate and in the sharing of our common burden.

To be effective, the Pastoral Council must be firmly based upon parish and regional councils. Mindful of this, I made the first major step toward the Pastoral Council this past week when I wrote to your priests enlisting their leadership in parish life to establish a Council or to update an existing one. By Pentecost 1972, it is my hope that every parish will have in operation a council or at least a Parish Council Formation Committee. By the first of the year I shall send the guidelines for a Parish Council, and assure you of the assistance of our Office of Pastoral Council Formation where needed. Furthermore, on or about Feb. 1, 1972, I shall publish a study paper on the "Mission of the Church in our Diocese." This I intend to be used by all the people in study groups, councils, churches, and schools as a source and stimulus for total renewal to Christ in the coming year. I am convinced that no council will ever be effective without a completely spiritual approach.

I write to you today because the work ahead, the bringing the good news to all men, belongs to each of you. Your involvement and interest in your own Parish Council will be essential. Above all, I ask your prayers and generous sacrifice for unless the Lord gives the growth all of our work is in vain.

With a blessing, I remain

Joseph L. Hogan

Your devoted Co-worker in Christ,

Pastoral Council A Work of Love

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strong base and a proper sense of mission must first be established. To achieve this he is planning a study paper or guide on the Mission of the Church in our Diocese to be sent out about Feb. 1.

Bishop McCafferty explained that this study paper is being prepared with the assistance of members of the formation council under Father James Marvin of St. Ambrose Church, Father Charles Mulligan, director of the Office of Human

Development, and Sister Mary Ann Binsack of Rochester.

"It is still in its working form, which will not be restricted as to content. It will largely address itself to renewal and mission in relation to the Church and parish. We hope to define and relate these four essential elements," Bishop McCafferty explained.

"We are expecting," Bishop McCafferty continued, "that in each region of the diocese a clergy coordinator will be chosen, by a method that has not yet been determined."

It is with this coordinator that the study paper will be offered for discussion on the parish level, to facilitate the parishes to respond to Bishop Hogan's request for leadership at the parish level, and the formation of parish councils by Pentecost 1972, which will be May 21.

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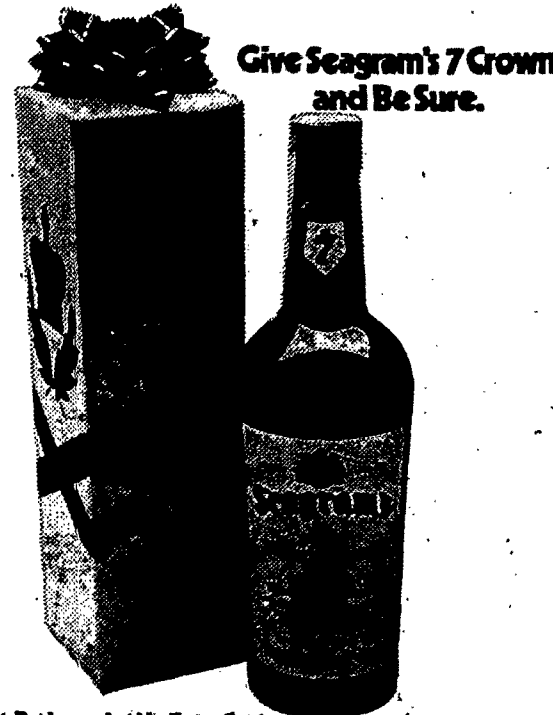
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Lay Teachers Picket

As their union officials held eleventh-hour negotiations with officials of the Association of Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of New York, teachers picketed in front of St. Cecilia's School in Harlem. After five months of unsuccessful talks, members of the Federation of Catholic Teachers voted to strike on Nov. 21. The union reportedly bargains for more than half of the instructional staff at the archdiocese's 32 schools. Despite the action, archdiocesan officials said all elementary and secondary schools would be open for "uninterrupted instruction" throughout the strike. (RNS)

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