

Religious Freedoms at Issue

U.N. Receives Major Vatican Document

United Nations, N.Y. [RNS] — The Vatican has urged the United Nations to revise a proposed declaration on religious freedom to place a greater emphasis on public worship and on the freedom of religious groups as well as individuals.

As one of 26 states responding to a draft Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance, the Holy See told Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim that it would also prefer that the document be a binding convention rather than a declaration.

It said that although the declaration does not claim to spell out the exact nature of religious freedom or to list all the actions and attitudes that constitute an infringement of that freedom, the document must nevertheless be viewed in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (The U.N. hopes to complete the proposed religious freedom declaration by Dec. 10, the 25th anniversary of the human rights declaration.)

In its comments, the Vatican cited Article 18 of the 1948 declaration, which proclaims the right of all to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

"This right includes not only freedom to change his religion or belief," the Vatican said, "but also freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. Freedom of religion, which involves freedom of choice and freedom of worship, is undermined both by religious intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds."

On the question of "religious freedom" the Vatican held that the preliminary draft appeared both imprecise and incomplete. It called for clarification, in particular "by laying greater stress on freedom to express inner convictions in public observances or professions of faith."

CCD Plans Variety Night In Penfield

The high school religion program at St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield is sponsoring a special program for the high school students on Tuesday, Nov. 13.

In place of regular classes, several guests have been invited to speak and conduct discussions with the students on various topics. Each of the guests is a specialist in some area of concern.

Included will be an attorney speaking on the new State Drug Laws, a physician who will discuss the effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain and body, two Religious conducting discussions on inner-city work and human development, a director from the CYO with the topic of youth leadership, a seminarian who will present a program on scripture and music, a college administrator discussing campus involvement and a priest who will speak on the Teen Seminar movement.

St. Joseph's revised the high school religion program this year and this special night is planned to expose the teenagers to various areas of concern in society and in the church.

BISHOP RETIRES

Toronto, Ont. [RNS] — Bishop Theodosius, spiritual leader of Canada's 150,000 Greek Orthodox, has announced his retirement effective Nov. 1.

The Vatican suggested that the declaration should therefore include the following statement in its preamble: "Considering that anything implying the deprivation or illegitimate restriction of a fundamental right on grounds of religion or belief, but not promotion of activities or institutions conducive to the expression, cultivation and development of religious or non-religious beliefs, must be regarded as discrimination."

With regard to an article in the proposed declaration that deals with religious freedom, the Vatican suggested that it read:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall

include freedom to adhere to or not to adhere to any religion or belief, profess it, in public or in private, to change his religion or belief in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, without being subjected to any legal, administrative, political, economic, or other coercion likely to impair his freedom of choice, decision, and exercise in the matter."

It said that this article should then condemn religious intolerance as manifested in the denial of those rights and by discrimination on grounds of religion or belief.

Concerning religious education, the Vatican suggested that the existing draft article be expanded. It wanted it to declare that every family, as a society in

its own right, has the right freely to live its own domestic religious life under the guidance of parents. Parents, in turn, have the right to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education.

It added: "The rights of parents are also violated if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with the religious beliefs of the parents, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all."

The Vatican further proposed that religions of a universal character have the right to maintain "organic relations" with their adherents and their respective communities. Such

adherents have the right, likewise, of maintaining relations with the centers of religions of a universal character, it said.

With regard to compulsion, the Vatican suggested that the declaration contain an article specifying that no one should be compelled to perform acts which are incompatible with the prescriptions of his religion or belief. It added that a person who is subject to conscription for military service should have the right, for reasons of conscience or deep conviction based on religious, ethical, or moral grounds, "to refuse military service or any direct or indirect participation in wars and armed conflicts, provided he agrees to serve the human community in some other manner."

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