

Cardinal Defines Role Of Laymen

Detroit (RNS) — The highest-ranking U.S. Vatican official recently told a Knights of Columbus Supreme Council meeting that Catholic belief is not a "kind of baseball game" between bishops and theologians with the laity looking on as spectators.

He said the faithful must be involved as "participants, vitally concerned, however diverse their roles, and none of them outside the ballpark so long as they are baptized, believe and play their respective but full positions."

Cardinal John J. Wright, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, made these points as he addressed a special session of the 92nd annual meeting of the Knights' top legislative and policy-making body. He declared that the Catholic laity "have a definite share in the priesthood of the Church."

The cardinal went on to say that "when we are talking about the total witness of the Church we must be very careful... not to talk too lightly of non-academic believers or to make too sharp distinctions between professional and the profane, vulgar mob if by these we mean the believing laity."

Faith is different from theology, he said, pointing out that faith is "total acceptance of the word of God, mandated by the Father through Jesus and transmitted through the Church."

"A theology which proceeds merely according to the laws of human sciences — which does not live, move and have its being within the Faith — is a theology which has built-in seeds of self-destruction."

He said the Church has two kinds of infallibility — that of teaching, exercised by the Pope

and bishops united with him, and the infallibility in believing, exercised by all believers.

Cardinal Wright stated that the faith of the mass of believers overcame such heresies as Arianism, which denied Christ's divinity and the "national apostasy" in England under Henry the Eighth.

A lay spirituality, he said, should be loyal, "but modern, if you like, but thoroughly consistent with Catholic faith and order, as popular and personal as decent democracy, but as papal and responsible as the Holy Roman Catholic Church, open to all that is good, true and beautiful and just, closed only to moral disorder and doctrinal nonsense."

"It should be humanistic in spirit, Christ-centered in piety, supernatural in divine faith," the prelate added.

After his talk the cardinal spent more than another hour chatting with reporters, emphasizing he learned his faith from lay persons and not from the hierarchy.

A native of Boston, he said: "As a kid I never went to Catholic school and I grew up in an environment hostile to religion. The family is the best school for religion as well as civilization and manners, and all that jazz."

Repeatedly saying degrees do

not necessarily insure a lively, committed faith, the cardinal recalled a lay teacher in his confirmation class who taught him "my deepest convictions about the future life."

"I don't know anybody writing these days as a professor of theology who makes the facts about death as real as Ruby Bancroft when we were 13 years old. She brought us to the wake of a classmate who was killed by a streetcar. We stood around the casket, listening to her."

"She didn't have a theory of death or the life of the world to come, but she made death real. The dynamics of faith have relatively little to do with information, but with insight."

The cardinal also reminisced about his brother who is a doctor with "insight awfully better than

mine." While his brother has no theological degrees, he credits him with being a "better theologian."

Talking about the lack of committed laity in the Catholic Church and other denominations, Cardinal Wright said:

"One reason the laity is not doing what they can do is they are not informing themselves about their received faith and making it intelligible to those around them. The question is, how do you get the message across. The earlier generation was far more prepared than this generation."



AYM Recreation Survey

Sixteen teenagers from the Lyell-Otis and Dutchtown areas polled their peers Aug. 25 on recreational needs in those neighborhoods. Shown taking a rest from their door-to-door endeavor are Paul Guarneri, Brian Doran, Mark Klueber, Bill Maeder, Rick Reber, Steve Stone, Kris Burruto, Judy Ryan and Donna Wilkinson. The Area Youth Ministry sponsored the project, with help from Holy Family and Holy Apostles churches and the Lyell-Otis Neighborhood Association.

THE OPEN WINDOW

John Paul II

Dear Father,

You did a fast about face in that last sentence — "You give the impression that once we have taken the first step to eliminate certain Church laws the next step will be a change in the basic doctrine. I do not buy that idea. The basic doctrines of Christianity are guaranteed by the Savior and by his promise of being present with us "all days even to the end of the world."

You were talking about the Roman Catholic Church and you had to say Christianity.

There was no way you could have said Roman Catholic Church in place of the word Christianity. As you well know there is a big difference between Roman Catholic and Christianity! Agree?

abstraction denoting belief in Jesus Christ and what he teaches. The various sects which comprise Christianity do so to a greater or lesser degree depending on how fully or accurately they believe in Jesus Christ or what he taught.

I believe that the Roman Catholic Church presents to us the fulness of Christian belief. The bark of Peter has had many barnacles through the centuries but these are extraneous to the reality and can be chipped off from time to time. The trouble is that people tend to look too much at the barnacles and assume because they are there that the ship is not seaworthy.

Ecumenism calls all who profess to be Christians to share their insights, to dialogue and to make an effort to understand one another so that the fulness of Jesus and his teaching may be brought to all people and that believers in Jesus Christ may be one as he desired them to be one. Frankly, I don't really see your problem.

Thank you,
An R. C.

Dear R. C.,

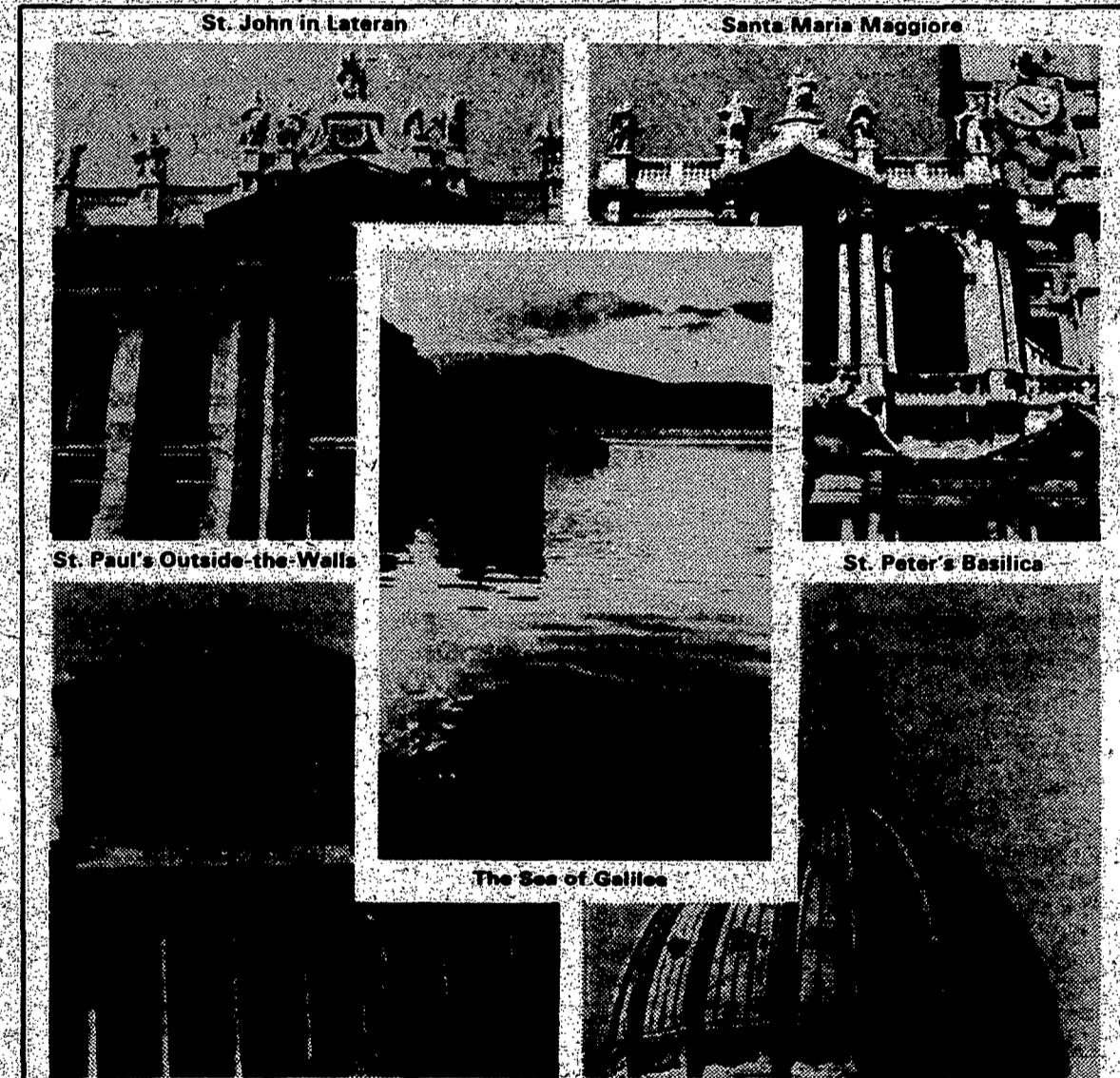
I'm not sure I know what you're really driving at. Christianity is an

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