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Bishops Dissect NCD at Meeting Here

By MARGARET CONNOLLY.



Photos by Susan McKinney

The Region II consultation on the national Catechetical Directory was summed up Wednesday afternoon by Bishops McGann and Broderick (lower row, l-r) and Bishops Hogan and Mugavero (upper row).

The National Catechetical Directory came under concentrated fire last week in Rochester, but when the target practice ended there was no sign of harm done. On the contrary, the bishops of New York State agreed that the sustained criticism had led to positive good.

"We were critical, even hostile, but the overall effect is not negative," Bishop Edwin Broderick declared.

The Albany prelate presided over a discussion with three of his colleagues that summed up the regional consultation on the directory draft. Twenty-nine bishops, 36 priests and Religious and 20 lay people had talked together for two days about the document that ultimately will present a definitive statement of Catholic beliefs, the elements that nurture faith and the ways in which religious education can confront the problems of contemporary American life.

The consultative process was acclaimed generally as an achievement in itself — "a good collegial process," said Bishop Broderick. "We all had our innings."

Even if the directory never should be finished, "The process has contributed to the growth of the church," Bishop John McGann of Rockville Centre observed.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan told the assembled delegates that he expected the directory to be "a candid statement of the several problems which separate American Catholics of good will in the area of religious education."

"It is not possible to produce a directory which consoles all the Catholic people and also speaks to principles," he said.

"The argument that a directory should not be controversial cannot be justified by reference to our Christian obligation to heal."

"In deciding on principles regarding religious education, we cannot be guided by a desire for a pseudo-peace."

The ordinaries and their auxiliaries from the seven dioceses of the state and the New York archdiocese constitute Region II in the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Their meeting with people involved in religious education has a counterpart in each of the other NCCB regions, none of which is, like Region II, a single state. The general consultations end this month, and a new draft of the directory will be hammered out on the basis of critical reports from the regions.

The convocation here peaked in a concelebrated Mass Tuesday evening at Sacred Heart Cathedral. The theme, "You Are Sent," emphasized the function of every Catholic in the promulgation of God's word.

Cardinal Terence Cooke presided over the general sessions Tuesday and Wednesday, holding tight to a timetable that allowed a total of four hours for group discussions, plus 90 minutes for reports from the six groups.

"Religious education is a lifelong process that cannot be terminated at any point," the cardinal archbishop reminded the

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One Faith, Many Theologies

By JOHN DASH

A recognition that there is "one Faith and many theologies" goes to the heart of trends in religious education today, Father Alfred McBride told those assembled at the Region II bishops' meeting last week.

Father McBride, as general editor of the developing National Catechetical Directory (NCD), addressed the 29 bishops and 56 delegates to the meeting, which was convened to present critiques on and recommendations for NCD.

During the course of his three-part lecture which extended over two days, Father McBride expounded on the tensions existing in the religious education field, a theological background for the NCD and a review of teaching

methods which have appeared in the field over the past 15 years.

The Norbertine priest, who peppered his speech with such quips as "I don't want to bring oil to Kuwait," told the bishops, religious and laymen that the three goals of contemporary religious education, and of the NCD, are to "proclaim the message of Jesus, to form community, which will then serve in love and justice."

The theme, he said, is "God's loving revelation of Himself and man's faithful and loving response to Him."

"But unfortunately," he said, "the NCD is all written against a background of anger and polarization," and the task ahead is to bring about a balance in opposing viewpoints.

One major tension occurs, he said, (and the assembly decidedly agreed with him) between those who hold to the idea that divine public revelation closed with the last book of the Bible, and those who hold the view that Revelation is an on-going process.

"This is a tension that must be faced," he warned.

Father McBride said that he hoped, however "we are moving into an age beyond conflict between the two different perspectives."

He said he sees revelation in terms of "Event and Explanation and Experience and Expression."

He cited the case of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visiting Elizabeth. The event of the pregnancy, he said, and the experience of visiting Elizabeth burst into the expression and explanation of Mary's Magnificat.

Usually, he noted, religious educators have reversed the process and gone from explanation to the experience.

"Why do we speak of ongoing revelation?" he asked. "Because we have a tendency to forget the experience and concentrate on the expression, to forget the active and hit on the passive."

Yet with this new approach, he cautioned, "There is a legitimate room for fear . . . if new answers

(to questions) occur that minimize or compromise the centrality of Christ as the Alpha and Omega and the uniqueness of the Church."

He lauded the recent "Hartford Statement" for its guidelines on the parameters of theological discussion.

The Hartford Statement was a joint effort of both Protestant and Catholic scholars to "correct" what they felt were untenable theological propositions.

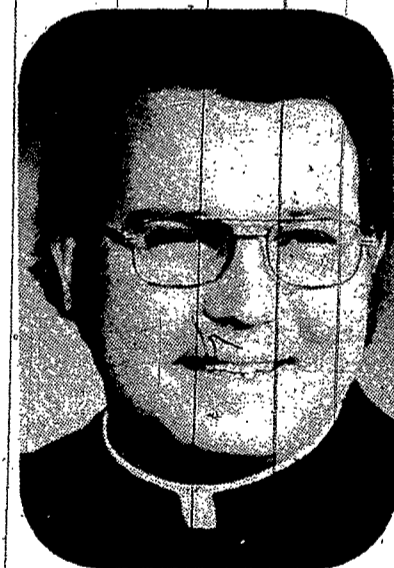
In the midst of all this, however, he hopes that theologians will "get away from Versus Theology" and see the "incomparable richness" in differing points of view.

Father McBride sees three distinct types of methodology involved in religious education over the last 15 years.

The first, he said, could be characterized by the word Kerygma (Greek for "preaching"), a methodology which came into full stride around 1960. Also called "Salvation History," the method focused on the "mighty deeds of God" spoken of through the prophets, centered in Jesus Christ, and continued on through the Church and its sacraments. In this method, "religion took on a personal tone, a positive tone."

This type of education was marked by lectures, memorization, questions and

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FATHER KOESTER

Father Koester Ordination Set

St. Jerome's Church will be the site for the ordination to the priesthood of Thomas Koester at 7:30 p.m., Friday, April 25.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan will ordain the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Koester Jr., of East Rochester.

Father Koester attended St. Jerome's School, East Rochester High School, St. John Fisher College (Becket Hall), Wadhams Hall, and St. Bernard's Seminary. He holds a Master of Divinity degree (M.Div.) from St. Bernard's.

His field work included teaching in numerous parishes in the

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