

The Process

Spirit of NCD Discussion Significant in Itself

"Process" was the word for last week's Region II consultation on the National Catechetical Directory. "The process" was seen afterward as a major achievement.

After about four hours of group discussion, Father Vincent Novak, S.J. of Fordham observed that "the consciousness raising going on here may prove to be more significant than the document itself."

Sister Theresa Kane of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious stressed "process" during the open forum that followed the last of the group reports.

"It should be stated in the directory," she said, "that it was done in consultation with the people of the United States."

Alterations in the tentative document were suggested in the meetings of six groups. Each group had, roughly, five bishops — ordinaries and auxiliaries — and nine other people, most of them active in a formal way in the religious education field. Each group met three times, after Father Alfred McBride had spoken on one or another aspect of the proposed directory.

The Courier-Journal followed the group chaired by Sister Michael Lappetito, director of religious education for the Diocese of Rochester. Reports back to the whole assembly indicated that many of the concerns voiced were the same in all of the groups. Some opinions, selected at random, follow.

Bishop Stanislaus Brzana of Ogdensburg: "There should be a more courageous assertion that the Catholic Church is the Church founded by Jesus Christ."

Father Thomas Gallagher, associate superintendent of

schools in the Rockville Centre diocese; "There are alienating, polarizing effects built into this document."

Father James Marvin of Rochester, in reply: "Our parish study certainly confirms that. On the parish level, we couldn't use this directory."

William Toomey of Albany, a member of the National Advisory Committee: "Whatever we make of it, the directory cannot be a panacea."

Bishop David Cunningham of Syracuse: "Father McBride's explanations of the tensions and polarities that exist, and that are reflected in the document — could these explanations be written into it?"

Father Vincent Novak, director of Fordham's Graduate Institute of Religious Education and Ministry, and one of the writers of The Lord and King series for high school students: "This needs an enormous overhaul to make it a practical guideline, but it's a first draft, after all."

Bishop Brzana: "Ongoing revelation, in the minds of many, raises expectations of new truths."

Sister Michael, responding: "Private revelation?"

Father Novak: "Talk of child-centered or adult centered education — the versus, either/or approach — creates a false problem. What we are doing is seeking balance."

Bishop Brzana: Abortion and euthanasia are not given sufficient emphasis, considering what great problems they are in American society."

Bishop Joseph Pernicone of the New York Archdiocese: "This directory will be a Godsend to

all of us. There is much dissatisfaction now, you know, with religious education."

Bishop John McCann of Rockville Centre: "This process itself is valuable. People representing the various areas of tension are sharing, expressing their attitudes."

Bishop Cunningham: "Bishops should invest more money in the training of teachers, and keep in touch with the pastors on what they are doing along that line. We must admit, we've been rather niggardly about this."

Father Novak: "Parents naturally are dismayed when their children stop going to Mass. The children have been sent to Catholic schools — the parents don't understand; they feel guilty. They should realize that the faith timetable is not the same for everyone. It takes longer for faith and understanding to develop in some people. But we are Americans — we expect instant success." — Connolly.



Ann Eckert of the Pastoral Office pins Bishop John E. McCafferty's name tag on his lapel.

A Quiet Chat

It was a quiet talk between brothers. The bishop laid his hand on the cardinal's shoulder and nodded in agreement with the words "It's so encouraging, these

meetings with the bishops and priests . . ."

They walked through the narrow corridor on the way to another meeting; but they walked slowly, as if savoring the moment.

"And the laymen," the cardinal replied, "No, I don't think this is the last."

A carelessly placed breakfast tray lay in their path. They were discussing the reporter's question as to whether this would be the last regional bishop's meeting. The two stepped around the tray. The cardinal sighed that he certainly hoped it would not be the last time the group would meet that there was a strength he drew from his brothers in the service of the Church.

Bishop John E. McCafferty and Cardinal Terence Cooke entered the waiting, empty elevator; and as the doors closed, they were still talking quietly, resurrecting in one observer's memory the ancient words "how good it is when brothers dwell in unity."



Taking note of an opinion from across the table are Sister Michael, Father Brent, Mrs. Jean Stavrakas of Staten Island and Father Henry Mansell, of Cardinal Cooke's staff.

Bishops Dissect

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assembly as he opened the meeting Tuesday morning.

"The teaching of religion is unlike any other form of education; its goal is not merely to transmit information, but to bring the person to maturity in Christ. It is not merely information but formation which is its purpose."

"Therefore," he continued, "the ultimate power in effective Christian teaching is not the teacher, the method, or the curriculum, but the Holy Spirit. Although all these elements are vehicles for the operation of the Holy Spirit, they are not the ultimate factors for success in achieving the goal."

Take-off point for each group meeting was a talk by Father Alfred McBride, general editor of the directory, who explained it in terms of its purpose, educational and theological dimensions. Father McBride stressed "one faith, many theologies."

Bishop Francis Mugavero

One Faith

Continued from Page 1
answers, and deductive reasoning, the priest said.

The second development, which he called Diaconia (service) flourished around 1968, and stressed "history with meaning today." During this time, he said theology was concerned with demythologization, personalism, value education, Rogerian psychology, an "embarrassment with riches" and "street teaching."

Also during this time there was an "explosion of methods," for

commented during the summation that he thought the various trends in theological thought need not be covered in the document.

Continuing, he exclaimed,

"We are a very daring region! In 16 hours, we have faced 2,000 years of teaching."

"We came here not as bishops, priests, people," he added. "We came here because we are Catholics, Christians. And our work shows positive results."

The questions most often raised had concerned, in general, definitions. Who is the audience; to whom is the directory addressed? There was a call for more than one version of the final document: in addition to the technical paper that would be a teacher's guide, there should be a simpler, more attractive form for parents and the general reader, Bishop McCann pointed out. Bishop Mugavero suggested a "focus on the family" in framing guidelines.

teaching religion and the use of the inductive reasoning process.

But "if We Shall Overcome was the song of the late 60s Amazing Grace is the song of the 70s," he said.

He calls this period Koinonia (community) during which we are experiencing a "recovery of the transcendent." He says there exists a "positive tension" today, which has surpassed a "destructive tension" of earlier days. Methodologies include both the inductive and deductive processes, moral education and the use of electronic media and developmental psychology.

The precise meaning of "revelation" was the grave concern of many participants.

In summing up, Bishop Hogan stated that revelation was indeed "the fundamental question before us."

"On this question, we must affirm the ongoing, continuous experience — the mediated nature of revelation. To fail to do so is an implicit denial of the ongoing presence of the Spirit of Christ working in the world today."

He also said he expected the directory to contain "an acknowledgement of the tension in the one faith and many theologies" and "the honest admission that faith in Jesus Christ demands search."

The four-bishop panel had been preceded by an open forum. It was followed by a few questions from people whose concerns had not been stated in the group reports. One man, father of five, asked for the return of the old sequence — Penance before First Communion. Another confessed to some confusion over the ways religious education had changed while his various children were growing up. A woman made a plea that a special ministry to the handicapped be specified in the document.

Bishop Broderick's opening remarks had touched on the diversity of opinions and special interests.

"If we are building a monument," he said, "let us remember that monuments are not built in a day."


He suggested that his listeners think of the directory and the process of putting it together as a "Noble Experiment."

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