

Bishops Synod

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bishops also want a more positive and pastoral treatment of the Church's teaching on sexuality. What this "fuller, more organic and more synthetic exposition" will entail is unclear but the bishops say it will not permit the use of contraceptives.

They hope that the new presentation will help to change the minds of Catholics who do not now accept the ban on contraceptives. The bishops feel that these people should be treated pastorally, which appears to mean that priests should be compassionate and patient with them until they accept the Church's teaching.

Synodal language groups also discussed the issue of divorced Catholics who have remarried, deciding that such persons should not be permitted to receive Holy Communion. Some groups suggested that the question be given further study, but one group voted down such a recommendation lest it give people false hopes.

One proposal that could have major ecumenical implications if adopted is that non-Catholics married to Catholics be allowed to receive Communion in the Catholic Church with their spouses and children. It is not clear under what circumstances this might be permitted, but the synod will probably recommend that the issue be

given further study. The non-Catholic would have to be a Christian who believed the same about the Eucharist as Roman Catholics do but for some other reason was not a Catholic.

Clear consensus also has developed around the idea of drawing up a charter for families that would define their rights especially in relation to the state. The charter would affirm the independence of the family vis-a-vis the state over issues of family planning, religious freedom and the education of the children. It would also assert the rights of the family in social, economic and political areas. Third

World bishops, for example, fear the growing pressure for forced birth control from foreign aid agencies and from their own governments.

What the synod will say about the rights of women also is unclear, although U.S. and Canadian bishops have taken a stand for a statement about the equal rights of men and women.

On one issue, there does not seem to be agreement. Should the African bishops be allowed to develop their own marriage rite that would take into consideration the traditional customs of their tribes?

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Vol. 97 No. 27 October 29, 1980

Courier-Journal (USPS 135-580)
Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 25¢. 1 year subscription in U.S. \$10. Canada and Foreign \$15. Offices: 114 South Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607 (716) 454-7050. Second-Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

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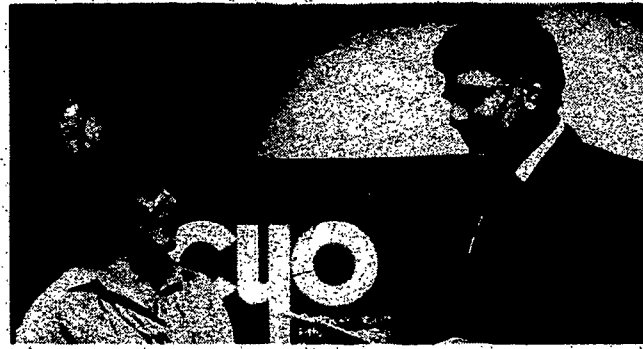
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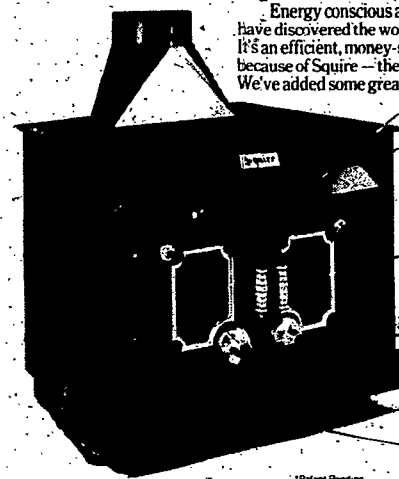
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