

Convention News

LITURGY

THE delegates of Group 1 at their last meeting (February 22) discussed first of all the section of the draft document dealing with the liturgical formation of the clergy.

Two separate ideas are found in this section: the role of the clergy in fostering in the faithful an appreciation of the liturgy, and the liturgical renewal of priests themselves. After some discussion it was decided to retain in this section only what concerns the liturgical updating of the clergy and to include what is said about their role in instructing the faithful in the section on the liturgical formation in the parish.

How are the clergy to be liturgically renewed? By study days, it was suggested, by refresher courses, by their reading Roman and diocesan documents (rather than commentaries on these which might distort their meaning) and by sending priests abroad for special training in the liturgy. The value of concelebration as a sign of the unity of the priesthood was stressed; it should also help to advance such ideas as coresponsibility and collegiality, which in turn will have their effect on fostering pastoral work, dialogue with the bishop and among the priests themselves, and a common concern to serve the community of Hong Kong.

A newly written chapter on Liturgy and Evangelization was next debated. A priest delegate stressed the role of the liturgy in instructing both Catholic and non-Catholic in the mysteries of our religion. It is therefore important, he said, that the liturgy should contain elements readily understandable to non-Christians and that the liturgical ceremonies that they frequently attend (e.g. midnight Mass, baptisms, marriages, funerals) should be carried out as perfectly as possible. Another priest was more reserved about the evangelizing role of the liturgy, since it presupposes faith in the participant. He warned therefore against exaggerating the place of the liturgy in the work of evangelization: its primary function is not the preaching of the gospel message, but the manifestation and celebration of the faith.

A number of delegates felt the chapter should say something about the place of the liturgy in preparing the faithful for their role as evangelizers. As one delegate put it, all activity in the church should aim at bringing men to the liturgy; the celebration of the liturgy teaches and instructs those with faith (and to a less extent non-Christians) and helps and inspires them to return to their work fired with zeal to be apostles among their friends and colleagues.

The chapter has two recommendations. The first urges that "the existing prescription that catechumens should take part faithfully in liturgical celebrations for at least six months (before baptism) be implemented and reinforced where necessary". A speaker felt that this prescription is often seen merely as a guarantee that the can-

didate will attend Sunday Mass faithfully once baptised; he thought that it should mean a good deal more: during these six months the catechumen should be brought to a love and appreciation of the liturgy and it should play a very positive role in his preparation for baptism.

The second recommendation states that "the presence of non-Catholic and non-Christian people at liturgical celebrations . . . should be welcomed and zealously taken account of . . . especially in the explanations given by the commentator and in the homily . . . and even in the choice of readings and prayers." A lay delegate proposed that this recommendation should include the idea of Catholics' inviting their non-Catholic friends to Mass and other services in the spirit of ecumenism. The recommendation was then accepted.

A priest brought up the question of parish processions and the diocesan celebration of the Feast of Christ the King. He thought that a minority group like the Church should not impose such great inconveniences (e.g. traffic hold-ups) on the general public. Because of these inconveniences, he thought the net result of religious processions is to annoy and not to edify the ordinary man in the street. Another speaker thought that the inconvenience was slight compared with that caused by other minority groups (e.g. race-goers, football fans) on much more frequent occasions. However it was felt that we must not simply ignore the just criticisms of others, and so it was agreed to say a few words in the document urging parish authorities to make sure that processions are not mere displays of pomp but genuine manifestations of faith — and that they do not unduly inconvenience the general public.

LAITY

AT their meeting on February 25, the members of Group 4 continued their discussion of the final sections of the draft which deal with lay organisations: personnel and activities.

The text reminds religious that they are called upon to assist lay associations as spiritual directors; hence "they should get more involved in activities outside the convent, hospital or school and be acquainted with the life of the layman." A speaker thought that lay people have their part to play in bringing this about: they ought, on an occasional evening, invite religious to their homes for a meal. A parish priest on the other hand said that his difficulty lay in receiving too many such invitations: it would be impossible for him to accept them all and it is only too easy to offend parishioners whose invitations have to be turned down.

"The laity should not join more than two lay associations and are encouraged to devote themselves to the service of one only." This statement in the text provoked a good deal of discussion. Has anyone the right to limit the faithful in this

Programme of Working Group Meetings during Coming Week

Liturgy and Sacraments	Monday, March 8
Religious Instruction	Tuesday, March 9
Social Mission of Church	Tuesday, March 9
Education	Wednesday, March 10
Government of Diocese	Friday, March 12

Place: Catholic Centre, Hong Kong.
Time: 8 p.m. — 10 p.m.

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way? one delegate asked. Another wanted to know why we should say *not more than two* instead of *not more than three* or even *four*. We should avoid all mention of definite figures, a third delegate maintained; we should merely say that no one should join more associations than he can faithfully and competently serve.

But a number of speakers favoured putting down some definite number, if only as a protection against the persuasiveness of priests and others in bringing subtle pressure to bear on those already members of one or more associations to join another . . . and yet another! Other speakers were ready to distinguish between organisations: some demand of their members only the recital of certain prayers and the payment of annual dues, whereas others make heavy demands on people's time and energy. More-over young people before marriage can manage to fit in more activities than their married elders. One delegate felt that we need a statement combining sufficient rigidity to protect the willing horse with enough flexibility to encourage the free and the energetic to contribute as much as they comfortably can to the service of others. It was therefore decided to recommend that "in principle the laity should not join more than two organisations with active programmes."

The following section of the draft intends to define the tasks of the Central Council of the Lay Apostolate. It was agreed to recommend that this body should be urged to keep in constant contact with the needs of those it exists to serve, and that it should give greater assistance to the parish associations that are affiliated to it. In defence of the Central Council it was stated in the course of the debate that its members are eager to be of service; for this purpose they have set up an extension committee which recently prepared a pamphlet to help associations in their planning and in the conduct of their affairs; but often the Central Council is kept in the dark about the needs of parish associations—communication with these seems to be all one way!

A delegate hoped that the revised document would make the point that people in Hong Kong generally have little time for participating in the activities of lay associations. This means that they must be made to feel that the sacrifice they make of their time is well justified. Therefore care must be taken that meetings are run efficiently, that functions are carefully planned and that the work assigned to members is well worth while.

As time was running out, the remaining few sections of the draft were passed with very little comment. Group 4 has thus finished discussing its document. The Redrafting Committee hope to be able to complete and circulate the revised version of the document in the not-too-distant future. After that, delegates will be invited to send in their comments on the new version without delay.

GOVERNMENT OF DIOCESE

A VERY lively discussion took place at the last meeting of Group 10 (February 26) on the question: should an arbitration and conciliation board be set up in the diocese? The function of this board, ac-

ording to the draft document, would be "to help resolve problems and deadlocks arising between the bishop, on the one hand, and individual priests on the other." The authors of the draft, after repeated study of the problem, came to this conclusion: "We are not unaware that in some parts of the world some good seems to have been achieved through the appointment of a Board of Arbitration and Conciliation, but (for reasons set out in the text) we feel we cannot lend ourselves seriously to the idea of such an appointment."

During the discussion a board with a rather wider scope was considered, that is, a board that would examine also disputes between individual priests, as well as injustices which lay-people (e.g. teachers, catechists) allege they have suffered at the hands of the clergy.

Many of those present at the meeting were strongly opposed to a board that would arbitrate in disputes between the bishop and his priests. They felt it would be contrary to the father-son relationship that should exist between them; that it would be detrimental to the diocese, since it would give the impression that the bishop no longer enjoys the respect of his priests; if the bishop wants advice in a disputed matter he can seek it privately without the need of a formally established arbitration board; aggrieved priests can always appeal to Rome against an episcopal decision; who could have authority in the diocese to appoint a board that would judge between the bishop (the supreme head of the diocese) and his priests? To make the decisions of such a board binding on the parties involved in a dispute would be to destroy the authority of the bishop; and if the decision is not binding what useful service would the board serve? To set up arbitration boards for disputes between clergy and teachers or catechists is a good idea; but these boards should be the Catholic Education Council and the Diocesan Catechetical Commission respectively: there is no need to set up a special board—we have enough committees and commissions in the diocese as it is!

Various reasons were put forward in favour of a diocesan arbitration board. In democratic institutions strict separation is insisted on between the executive and the judiciary. Not so in a diocese, since the bishop is both judge and chief executor: we need some structure to compensate for that situation; it is important that justice should not only be done but also seem to be done: now when a bishop judges a dispute between himself and one of his priests, he is one of the interested parties involved; if he decides the case, justice may well have been done, but it will not *seem* to have been done; if the conduct of a priest meets with official disapproval, is it fair that all the opprobrium which will necessarily follow disciplinary action taken by the bishop should fall on his shoulders?

After these and many other views had been vigorously debated and acceptable motions had been framed, it was time for voting. A motion proposing the setting up of "an arbitration board to which disputes involving the clergy may be referred," was passed. An amendment urging that this board should not be a perman-

ent structure but should be set up whenever a dispute needing arbitration arises, was defeated. A second motion withdrawing from the board competence over disputes between the bishop and his priests was also passed.

As people were getting their breaths back after the debate and the voting, a delegate stood up to suggest that the meeting had just passed motions without properly discussing them: no one quite knew what the terms of reference of such a board would be, who would compose it, how it would work. He therefore suggested that the votes taken should be rescinded and the problem brought up for more orderly discussion at the next meeting. This proposal had a mixed reception. The chairman, while unwilling to cancel the voting that had just taken place, promised that there would be opportunity for further debate on this vexed problem at the next meeting (Friday, March 5).