

# "Diocesan Convention Already Begun!"

"THE Diocesan Convention in Hong Kong has already started." Fr. John Russell, S.J., Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, told a gathering of Diocesan priests, Maryknoll priests, Sisters Announcers of the Lord, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Maryknoll Sisters, catechists, and teachers at an all-day planning session for the Convention.

This meeting was held at the Maryknoll Sisters' Hospital, on Wednesday, January 29, 1969. There were about 60 participants.

In his introductory message, Father Russell stated that the coming together of the people concerned and the beginning of a real dialogue to discuss the best ways and means to live our vocations as Christians in Hong Kong in 1969 is the important part of the Convention. And this, he said, has begun. As a result of the growth in our diocese in recent years and as a result of the Vatican Council, we now must do some stock taking to see our problems and to see if our programmes are balanced and following the right path to make "internal renewal a reality". Father Russell hinted that just as the spirit of the Bishops assembled in Rome for the Council changed as their deliberations went on, so too will our outlooks and attitudes change as the Convention moves on. The questions of renewal and reform are new and have not yet been considered. The Convention should bring about a deeper sense of unity, a better understanding of mission, and a true Christian spirit which is the driving force to transform our diocese.

Father Russell outlined the task of the Convention and divided this into three phases: 1) Consultation, 2) Commissions, and 3) Delegates. Consultation, he said, is to be wide and everyone is to have his say, and this is what has already begun. Renewal is everybody's responsibility, and this consultation should go on simultaneously in parishes, schools, organizations, religious orders, and groups, etc. Commissions will soon be elected by the Pastoral Council. Their work is to study the main ten topics of concern for the diocese and to draw up documents about these phases of the work of the Church here in Hong Kong. After these documents are completed, then delegates will meet to approve or disapprove them. Father Russell stressed that this is the less important part of the Convention compared to the consultation and the documents composed by the Commissions. He stated that the Convention is to have only an advisory role, but its role may change as the Convention continues.

Our contribution to the Convention should be prayer to the Holy Spirit to help us listen to Him, charity, tolerance, and openness as we examine the historical reality of our diocese, and to try to bring about a fruitful dialogue which should stir up interest and enthusiasm, much talk and discussion to bring out suggestions and meaningful changes which will be accepted and put into practice.

In the second address of the morning, Father John Jones, S.J., explained "The Hong Kong Attitude and Awareness Study" which will soon take place. This will be a scientific study or poll, similar to the Gallup or Harris Polls in the United States. Questionnaires are already being prepared to find out how aware the general public is of the Church in Hong Kong. The purpose of this study is to discover what people think about the Church and what their feelings towards the Church are. Just how the general public feels

about our medical work, our educational programmes, our social work, our personnel, as well as the entire Church are what this survey hopes to reveal. It will not establish values nor will it tell us what we should be doing. It will tell us what people know about us and what they think of us. The first phase will be a survey among the general public and the second phase will question what we Catholics think about ourselves. It is hoped that the entire survey, including tabulation and interpretation of the results, will be completed by Christmas, 1969. A professional market research firm will take up this survey and a computer will tabulate the results.

In the brief discussion which

followed these talks, the need for publicity, especially in the public press and mass media, was emphasized. It was also stressed that the whole Church — head and members, is in dialogue during this Convention, and though this Convention has no role of authority, it can have great effects on our thinking, and thus bring about changes. This process should be a continuing one in our personal lives and in our parish lives.

The meeting then broke into small discussion groups to try to find answers to the questions: "What do you expect to get out of this Convention?" and "What is our role in this Convention?" In the afternoon, there was a panel presentation treating the

topic, "Values in the Church." Sisters Mary Heath, M.M., and Irene Kwok, M.M., and Fathers Vincent Lau and Ronald Saucchi, M.M., spoke of the "emerging values" present in today's Church — change, community, collegiality, authority, human part of life, part of growing and always involves danger and risks. It is natural and constant. The idea of human values was stressed, the fact that we are more than just spiritual. We are integrated persons who are human, whether we are a husband or a wife, adult or child, religious or lay, and as we are being transformed into Christ, we should not be broken down as

persons. Three important points to remember, often overlooked, were noted: 1) A human being is much more than a machine. 2) We should serve people because they are people with needs and require our service, and 3) You and I are important, and we can change the world and Hong Kong. It was suggested that since as yet there is no theme for the Convention, one should be drawn up along the idea of Christian humanism as the important basis of our work.

The day was concluded with a concelebrated Mass at 5 p.m.

*Sister Marya, M.M., and  
Rev. James V. O'Halloran,  
M.M.*