

# Hong Kong Diocesan Convention

## Letter of the Bishop on Occasion of First Meeting of All the Delegates to the Diocesan Convention

Dear Friends,

The Diocesan Convention is soon to enter on a new phase. On Sunday, February 15, the 420 delegates chosen by the people of the diocese are coming together for the first time to beg the light of the Holy Spirit and to begin discussions on the draft documents on which many groups of people have been working during these last six or seven months.

We are standing on the threshold of the seventies. It seems an appropriate time to pause and reflect a little. During the past ten years the world has been caught up in a movement of very rapid change. Extraordinary advances have been made in many branches of science and technology. No less spectacular has been the change in men's ways of thinking, in their attitudes, their scale of values. In few other periods of history has there been so much change within so short a space of time. And so it is to a very much different world from that of yesterday that the Church must be the sign of salvation today and tomorrow. It is among people whose needs and aspirations and values are changing so rapidly that the Church must make visible and tangible the Father's love in Christ.

We are called upon to be faithful to the gospel. In common with every generation we must ask ourselves what demands this gospel makes of us here and now. We rightly put much stress on the notion of service: Christ washed the feet of his disciples and told us we should do the same for one another. An intelligent concern for others demands that we put our limited resources and manpower to their most effective use. We must therefore thoughtfully examine what are the priorities of Christian ser-

vice today and for the years ahead in this bustling, commercial and industrial city that is Hong Kong with all its unique problems. Are we sure that undertakings started in response to the pressing needs of many years ago still retain all their relevance and usefulness today?

The questions are endless. The laity want to know how to be more actively involved in the mission of the Church. Young people seriously question the value of many of the traditional ways of thinking and acting. Priests are asking themselves what their role should be as servants of God's people in the industrial, urban situation of today. Nuns and brothers are searching for ways to adapt their way of life to modern demands while still remaining faithful to their vocation.

We owe it to ourselves and to those we wish to serve to try to find answers to these and many other questions which present themselves with such urgency just now. This we hope to do at the Diocesan Convention. To guide us in our search for answers we have the indispensable aid of the documents of the Vatican Council II. In a letter I wrote more than a year ago announcing the decision to hold the Convention I said that its purpose was to review the work of the diocese in the light of the Vatican Council and to plan future development accordingly.

There was a time when the bishop of the diocese would normally have been expected to take counsel with himself or with a few trusted advisers and work out such a plan. Neither present theological thinking on community responsibility, however, nor the temper of the times would favour this manner of proceeding today. Nor would it in any way be a wise policy.

The problems that challenge us are far too complex for any one person to pretend to have all the answers. The issues at stake in this enterprise of updating the diocese and setting a course for the future are too important not to avail of the ideas and experience of as many persons as possible. And so the first step in preparing the Convention was an invitation to the people of the diocese to speak up, to make their voices heard so that it would be clear through them what the Spirit is saying to the Church in Hong Kong. The letters you wrote were carefully studied, and specially chosen commissions were entrusted with the task of drawing up documents dealing with ten of what seemed the more important areas of concern. These commissions have worked with great energy and competence and the diocese owes them a great debt of gratitude for their devoted work which I should like here to acknowledge on behalf of us all.

The ten documents are now ready. In their present form they are first drafts. In order that they may gradually receive their final shape they will have to be the basis for much discussion. Here again the combined wisdom of the diocese is being called on. In the weeks before Christmas, as you know, the 420 delegates were elected by various bodies: the 200 lay-people by their parish councils and organisations; the 110 priests by their fellow priests; the same number of nuns and brothers by their colleagues. These will soon start regular meetings to discuss the draft documents and make recommendations for any changes in them they may feel are called for.

These delegates are your representatives. This does not mean that you personally have no responsibility

towards the Convention. The Convention is a community undertaking; you have a part to play; there can be no real renewal of the diocese apart from the renewal of the the individuals it comprises. I would appeal to you therefore to become involved in the Convention, to obtain copies of the draft documents, to read them and if possible to put your comments down in writing and send them in to the Convention. The meetings of the delegates to discuss these draft documents will be open to the public. Details of time and place will be announced later. I would ask you to attend some of these meetings and make your contribution to the debates for the good of the diocese.

The Vatican Council was very much concerned with the question of Christian unity. Pope John was clear-sighted enough to see that the most realistic and effective way for the Roman Catholic Church to promote unity at the present stage in the history of Christian divisions was by a thorough-going renewal of her life and activity. If the purpose of the Convention is to apply the spirit of the Vatican

Council to our concrete situation in Hong Kong, its ecumenical aspect cannot be ignored. We hope that the renewal we are embarking upon will lead us to greater fidelity to the gospel and bring us closer to our Risen Lord, for it is only in him that we will achieve true unity with our fellow-Christians. Members of other Christian Churches will be present at the meeting on February 15 and we hope that we shall have their support and presence at the discussions that will commence soon afterwards.

The Convention is our response to Christ's invitation to read the signs of the times. We try to interpret these, believing they are sure indications of the will of God for us in the future. In this delicate task we shall need a great deal of divine light. And so in conclusion I would ask you to pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit may direct and inspire the discussions of the delegates, and that the Convention, through God's grace, may be the occasion of a genuine Christian renewal in the diocese. Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, 1970

† Francis Hsu,  
Bishop

## DIOCESAN CONVENTION

**T**HE concelebrated Mass on Sunday, February 15, at 4 p.m. in Caritas Hall, Caine Road, will be in Chinese. Eucharistic Prayer n. 2 will be recited.

# THIS MEANS YOU

IN mid-September, 1968, it was announced that the Senate of Priests and the Pastoral Council of the Diocese of Hong Kong had 'responded positively to Bishop Francis Hsu's proposal to convene a synodal Diocesan convention.' The Senate appointed Father John Russell secretary general of the Preparatory Committee. Ten commissions and various sub-committees were set up and the work of preparing for the Convention has been going forward steadily ever since.

On Sunday, February 15, the first meeting of the Convention will be held in Caritas Hall, Caritas House, Hong Kong.

The Convention will not be a legislative body. Its task will be, not law-making, but examination of the diocese, to discover its present needs and to plan for the future, so that it may help us ever more effectively 'to bring Christ ever more fully into our lives and into the life of the whole community of Hong Kong.' (Bishop's Christmas Message, 1969.)

It is of the utmost importance for us all to grasp the fact that the Convention is a convention of the whole diocese. This was the original purpose of the Bishop and of the Senate of Priests and of the Pastoral Council, and all those engaged in the work of preparation have kept this purpose constantly before them. The various commissions contained all the experts available; but they were not asked simply to apply their expertise to the points put before them. They were asked rather to investigate the matters under consideration in the light of their knowledge of what the members of the diocese and of the community at large thought about these matters.

In this search for the mind of the public, the commissions were not left to their own devices. The public was asked to send in suggestions, and this invitation was taken seriously by the public. In the course of the past seventeen months 700 letters have been received by the organizers. This number may not seem very large—roughly one letter for every 350 Catholics in Hong Kong. Yet given the repugnance that almost everyone feels on sitting down to write a serious letter 700 is a large number. Probably ten people said to themselves 'I should like to write to the Convention about . . . ' for one who actually wrote. Those who did write may fairly be assumed to have cared deeply about the points they were making.

The drafts prepared by the commissions are now being made available to the public for discussion and for comment by letter or through delegates. They are not to be put before the Convention for blanket approval. In his Christmas Message, our Bishop reminded us that they 'are *drafts*, meant to be amended, improved upon, enriched. They do not offer cut and dried solutions to our problems. The solutions are tentative solutions, presented to you for careful examination.'

'I ask you,' Bishop Hsu went on, 'to read these documents and to discuss them. Let no serious-minded Catholic say he is not concerned. Unless he realizes that he is concerned, the Convention will fail in its primary purpose, namely to involve the people in the renewal of the Church.'

Note these words well: the primary purpose of the convention is to involve the people in the renewal of the Church.

This means you.

# **Solemn Opening of Diocesan Convention**

**T**HE first meeting of the Hong Kong Diocesan Convention will be held at Caritas House, Caine Road, Hong Kong, on Sunday, February 15.

The opening Mass will be concelebrated, in Chinese, at 4 p.m. by Bishop Francis Hsu of Hong Kong and the priest - delegates. The other delegates will participate.

The faithful in general are invited to attend so that by participating in this opening Mass they may manifest their cooperation in the work of the Convention and that they may call down God's Blessing upon its work.