

# Diocesan Convention

## MEETINGS OF WORKING GROUPS

Place: Catholic Centre

Time: 8 p.m.-10 p.m.

- |                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Liturgy and Sacraments         | Monday, March 9     |
| 2. Religious Instruction          | Tuesday, March 10   |
| 3. Education                      | Wednesday, March 11 |
| 4. Laity                          | Thursday, March 12  |
| 5. Priestly Life                  | Friday, March 13    |
| 6. Religious                      | Monday, March 16    |
| 7. Social Dimension of the Church | Tuesday, March 17   |
| 8. Communications Media           | Wednesday, March 18 |
| 9. Ecumenism                      | Thursday, March 19  |
| 10. Government of Diocese         | Friday, March 20    |
| 11. Evangelisation                | Saturday, March 21  |

All, whether delegates or not, are welcome to attend these meetings and join in the discussions.

*N.B.*—There will be no meetings during Holy Week  
(March 22-28)

## Convention News

**WORKING** Group n.4 (Laity) held their first meeting in the Catholic Centre Library on Thursday, February 26. The Convener, Sister Rose Bernadette, gave an explanation of the ground rules, after which there followed a short exchange of views as to the best way of conducting the discussions that will begin at the next meeting (March 12), by which time the document on the Laity will be in the hands of the delegates.

On Friday evening it was the turn of Working Group n.5 (Priestly Life). Forty people attended this meeting, which began with a brief explanation of the procedure to be followed in the discussions, given by Father Vincent Lau, the Convener. Then Father Commissari, of the drafting commission, introduced the first part of the document. He pointed out that this section, dealing with the theology of priestly life, betrayed the presence of two distinct tendencies in the drafters. The result was necessarily a compromise; hence the document was not altogether free from certain inconsistencies. Next Father Lau explained the second part of the document, which deals with some rather more practical aspects of the life of priests.

The delegates and members of the public present then expressed their views. Some felt that too much space has been given in the document to theory and insufficient attention has been paid to practical issues: the Vatican Council documents already contain clear theological principles concerning the priesthood: it is unnecessary to repeat these in the document. Moreover, any theological exposition needs to be kept simple, so as to be within the grasp of the ordinary reader. One speaker stressed the importance of agreeing on the definition of the role of the priest; not that we have to start from scratch and discover what this role is, but rather to draw on the best of what

is being currently written on the subject and try to arrive at a better understanding of it. Once agreement is reached on this point, then the discussion can proceed to defining the role of the priest in Hong Kong. Another speaker pointed out that the document should explain that the essential aspects of the priesthood remain unchanged, although certain externals, such as dress, etc., have of course changed.

At the next meeting of this Group the theological section, taken as a whole, will be the matter for discussion.

On Monday, March 2, discussion started on the document on Religious. Nearly 100 people were at this meeting and heard speakers suggest that the contents of the draft document should be more theological, drawing on what is contained in the Vatican II Constitution on the Church (ch. 6) and the Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life. It was felt that if clear answers were forthcoming to questions such as: who, what are religious? where are they going?, then answers to the more practical questions could be arrived at more easily. The Convener, Father O'Meara, appealed for suggestions regarding areas of religious life deserving treatment but not touched on in the document. One speaker proposed airing the problem of the adaptation of religious life to the local (Hong Kong) culture: it would be regrettable if there were truth in the contention that joining the religious life entailed giving up one's own cultural heritage. Stress was laid in this connection on the importance of knowing the local language well. Brother Anthony Chan (La Salle College) was requested to prepare a statement on adaptation: how missionaries from abroad can adapt themselves to the local culture and how the training of local religious can be such as to enable them to follow a style of life not simply copying European tradition but adapted to local conditions.

Another speaker asked for a description in the document of contemporary man, his needs, desires, problems: since it is to him as he is in his concrete situation that religious have to respond. A further suggestion was the inclusion of an explanation of why religious do not marry: that it is not through fear of marriage or lack of opportunity, but because of a free choice, in order to be able to serve others in a different way. It was later proposed that the document should deal also with the vows of poverty and obedience.

A lay person was of the opinion that the document does not bring out sufficiently how wonderful the religious life is. Today so much prominence is given to persons leaving religious orders that there is need to re-state the holiness of the religious life in a way that will appeal to young people, emphasizing the joy involved in total surrender.

The Convener then proposed electing the small group that will take charge of the actual redrafting of the document. But by a unanimous vote it was decided to put off this election until the members of the Group have become better acquainted with one another. The next meeting will be held on Monday, March 16.