

# Convention News

## PRIESTLY LIFE

THE ministerial priesthood was the first subject for discussion at the fourth meeting (April 17) of Working Group 5 (Priestly Life). A number of speakers maintained that the quotation used in the section dealing with this topic was not very apropos, since it described the source but not the nature of the ministerial priesthood. Some alternative passages were suggested and discussed at length but no agreement could be reached. Finally it was decided to leave to the redrafting committee (yet to be chosen) the choice of a suitable passage, as well as the recasting of the whole section in accordance with the criticisms made in the course of the discussions.

The remainder of the time was spent discussing the order in which the following sections should be taken. Some thought that paragraph 9 on the priest as minister of the word and of the sacraments should come next: this seemed a better order from the ecumenical point of view. Others felt that the order followed by the document should be kept: the paragraph treating of the priest's general role as servant should come before paragraphs dealing with particular aspects of this service or ministry. As a result of a vote it was decided to take paragraph 9 before paragraph 8 (Ministry of Leadership) and paragraph 7 (Priest as Servant). These paragraphs will be discussed at the next meeting (May 1).

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

The redrafting committee (Brother Bosco Wei, Sister Bernadette Woo, Father Pieraccini, M. Elizabeth Mak, and Brother Anthony Chan) have presented the first section of a new draft document to Working Group 6 (Religious Life). At a meeting on April 20 various suggestions were put forward to improve the order of the paragraphs. However, it was not always easy to follow the schemes proposed by the speakers since the text was arranged differently in the Chinese and English versions. This difficulty prompted a plea for uniformity in the two versions to facilitate cross references. One delegate thought that the section under discussion spread itself rather too thinly over too many topics; another delegate however pointed out that this was just the introduction to the new draft and that many of the points touched on here would be dealt with in greater depth later on in the document.

Paragraph 7 of the new draft speaks of religious as "bearing witness to Christ and His Church, bringing Christ and His Church to the world. In so doing (the religious) cooperates in enabling the Mystical Body of Christ to reap a good harvest of souls." To this it was objected that the document ought to stress what is specific to religious: what is said here, it was pointed out, can apply equally to the laity. Again, we should not speak of bringing Christ and His Church to the world: the task of religious is to find Christ and His Church in the world. Exception was also taken to the

phrase: a good harvest in the salvation of souls. A delegate thought that this sounded rather out of harmony with today's thinking.

At this stage of the meeting it was decided to discuss the document in a more orderly manner, going through it section by section. One speaker felt that the opening sentence: "since material prosperity has progressed by leaps and bounds, human life is undergoing a very rapid change," needed to be filled out a little, and proposed inserting a reference at least to scientific progress.

The Chinese version of the section headed *Personality Development* seems to imply that hitherto no consideration had been given to the dignity of the individual or to his special talents etc., in religious life. To many this seemed an exaggeration and by a very large majority it was decided to remove this implication. In another vote it was agreed to send the whole of paragraph 2 (on personality development) back to the redrafting committee for revision, with the request that greater emphasis be placed on the evangelical counsels in religious life than on personal fulfilment. In a further vote it was decided to take out the reference at this point to non-interference in the internal affairs of religious congregations. A more suitable place could be found later in the document for a note to this effect.

## SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH

The last meeting of Working Group 7 (Social Dimension of the Church) was chaired by the Vice-Convenor, Mr. Paul Tsui. After the recently circulated 14 rules on the conduct of meetings had been read in both Chinese and English, an emergency motion was put to the house recommending the sending back of the document to the original drafting commission for correction, especially of the Chinese translation, and for a clear statement of the sources on which the facts of each chapter are based. The whole meeting was taken up with the discussion of and voting on this and closely connected motions.

It was pointed out, for instance, that the changed situation since the writing of the draft, required the correction of certain statements that were no longer true, e.g. concerning the legal right of workers to one day off a week. Some speakers felt that the contents of the whole draft should be discussed first and then a redrafting committee (to be appointed later) should be asked to rewrite the document in the light of these discussions. Others asked that a new redrafting committee be appointed rather than that the former one be asked to work over the document again. One delegate made an eloquent plea for a more optimistic and positive style, in the manner of *Gaudium et Spes*, in the newly revised draft. From the discussions it became clear that not everyone was clear on the distinction between the work of touching up

of the Chinese translation) to make it a suitable basis for discussion and the thorough revision of the draft to be carried out in the light of the comments made in the course of the debates.

As a result of the lengthy debate of the emergency motion which took place before a packed audience (over 140 persons were present, the largest audience a Working Group meet-

ing has so far attracted), the draft is to be sent back for correction to a special committee comprising the five members of the original drafting commissions, the Convenor, Vice-Convenor, and the two secretaries of the Working Group. A motion to suspend further meetings of the Working Group until this work has been completed was defeated, and so the next meeting will be held in the Catholic Centre on May 5.

## COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

Working Group 3 (Communications Media) continued discussing the new draft document prepared for it by the redrafting committee. In the course of the meeting sections 2-7 were discussed in turn and separate votes taken. In each case by large majorities it was decided to accept the sections on the understanding that they would be worked over by the redrafting committee in accordance with the views expressed in the course of the debates. This arrangement enabled the meeting to stick to the discussion of ideas and to avoid wasting time haggling over ways of putting things. As a result a good deal was accomplished in two hours.

A speaker criticised one of the paragraph under discussion as "sentimental, pontifical and repetitious." In reply a spokesman for the redrafting committee pointed out that it should not be surprising that the paragraph sounded pontifical since much of it had been lifted out of papal documents! The exact meaning of a few sentences of the new draft was not clear to some delegates. It was therefore suggested that these should be rewritten: if certain points remained obscure to persons the present draft (and especially

knowledgeable in the field of communications and who had made a study of the draft, they would be even more puzzling to the casual reader. Any such ambiguity, it was felt, should be a clear sign to the redrafting committee to reword the offending sentences in a more immediately understandable way.

## ECUMENISM

The meeting of Working Group 9 (Ecumenism) on April 23 opened with the reading of a number of letters from the public commenting on the draft. One of the most interesting came from the father of one of the Group's secretaries — an Anglican who feels strongly about the unequal treatment of the non-Catholic party to a mixed marriage. A delegate proposed that each letter be first formally acknowledged and then if any of the Group so desired he could reply at greater length dealing with the points raised in the correspondent's letter. There then followed a report of the first meeting of the newly constituted redrafting committee: the three members had come together only to find that they had not enough material to allow them to begin the work of redrafting the paragraphs already discussed and voted on by the Working Group at previous meetings.

The main part of the document gives much space to setting out the suggestions sent in by the faithful to the Convention. This arrangement seemed to lend itself to misunderstanding: some of Working Group failed to distinguish between the suggestions of the faithful and the recommendations proposed in the draft. It was decided that if the members of the Working Group could be confused in this way it was necessary to bring out the distinction a good deal more clearly in any revised version of the document.

## Programme of Meetings for the Coming Week

Religious Life	: Monday, May 4
Social Dimension	: Tuesday, May 5
Communications Media	: Wednesday, May 6
Ecumenism	: Thursday, May 7
Government of Diocese	: Friday, May 8
Evangelisation	: Saturday, May 9
Place: Catholic Centre	Time: 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.

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