

# Convention News

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

THE last meeting (June 23) of Group 2 opened with a discussion on the last two parts of a rewritten version of recommendation 7, dealing with the adult catechumenate. How much uniformity should there be in the diocese regarding both the manner of presenting the faith to adults and the length of the period of preparation for baptism? Speakers were inclined to stress individual differences which would tend to make exceptions more frequent than any possible general rule. As a result of a short discussion it was decided to recommend that the manner of presenting the faith to adults should be adapted to individuals, taking into account their educational background, special needs, etc., and that the criterion for readiness for baptism should be a living faith apparent in the catechumen's way of life during a certain length of time prior to baptism. The difficulty of keeping "clear records of catechumens' progress" was also pointed out: how is one to measure a person's relationship to Christ?

The last part of the recommendation, urging that means be devised to keep in close contact with the newly baptised, was accepted without opposition.

At this stage of the meeting the Convener requested the Group to express their opinions on recommendations 1-3 of the same chapter, which had not been voted on at earlier meetings. The first recommendation, urging studies in parish sociology to determine the best means of developing a dynamic Christian community, met with no difficulty. On the second recommendation, proposing the setting up of several experimental personal parishes for workers, youth or other groups, opinions were sharply divided. Many speakers were opposed to the recommendation: they felt that such parishes would be divisive of the community and risked introducing class distinctions; existing "geographical" parishes represent a cross-section of the Catholic community and this seems far preferable; who, moreover, would decide to what personal parish an individual belonged? The pastoral advantages to be gained from such groupings can be achieved through already existing parish organisations.

Those who supported the recommendation thought that some had misunderstood the nature of a personal parish. The Chinese translation of the term had possibly led some to foresee distinctions along class lines. But the reality there is no danger of this; as a matter of experience, people of the same profession and the same background do tend to come together; personal parishes would not separate people; through the liturgy, the members of these parishes, e.g. workers, youth, would be brought closer together. Other speakers stressed that the important thing was to encourage experiments in the pastoral care of the faithful, whether through personal parishes or other groupings, e.g. pastoral units or chaplaincies.

A delegate reminded the Group that personal parishes already exist in Hong Kong, and examples of these were given. Some, however, thought that the examples quoted had little to recommend them. In practice, a delegate pointed out, these experimental parishes would be set up following the sociological studies suggested in the previous recommendation; also the proposal had built-in safeguards,

since it urged a constant evaluation of the effectiveness of such experimental groupings.

From the discussion a certain consensus seemed to emerge. All were strongly opposed to anything that might be a cause of class distinctions; at the same time many felt the need for better pastoral care of special groups. After a motion to delete the recommendation had been defeated, the Group passed an amended version, proposing that several experimental parishes of different kinds be set up according to various needs, always with care to avoid class distinctions.

## EDUCATION

THE Redrafting Committee of Group 3, chosen at the last meeting (June 24), comprises Mother Amelia Ip, Mr. Joseph Kwok Sheung Leung, Mr. Chau Yam Chi, and Mr. Augustine Chou.

The first topic for discussion was an observation in the draft to the effect that "policies governing admission to primary schools can exert a very great influence on the kind of work that is done in kindergartens" (§25). Some speakers thought that Catholic schools should educate children in the manner they consider best suited to their all-round development and not in view of the primary entrance examination; if Catholic schools can show that this is the right thing to do, other schools will follow; we should not continue doing what we consider ill-advised just because everyone else is doing it. Others pointed to the dangers that would follow if children were not prepared for the entrance examinations: we should lose the best pupils; parents would be unimpressed by the examination results of Catholic schools and would send their children to non-Catholic ones.

The next point discussed was punishment in primary schools. Various opinions were expressed: punishment in primary schools only makes children hate school; no, it is unfair punishment that has this effect, e.g. writing out school regulations a set number of times instead of being asked to do more arithmetic, if the child is being punished for faults in arithmetic class; in praising and punishing we must be very careful on account of the lasting impression these make; schools should know that corporal punishment is not allowed; details of lesser punishments should not be discussed at the Convention; the problem is that parents do not always complain about excessive punishment and principals often do not know what goes on in some classrooms; punishment, if administered in the spirit of love, will have good results; children should never be punished out of anger; all, including religious, must learn to exercise great self-control; the need for punishing very often arises from the teacher's own failures, present or past. A suggestion that teachers should resemble parents and not punish children excessively was turned down in favour of a proposal that punishment should be a means of educating the child and should be carried out in the spirit of Christ.

The last point discussed concerned newspaper reports of drug addiction and drug peddling in schools. Some delegates opposed any mention of this matter, at least in the section of the draft under discussion: otherwise we might give the wrong impression of the size and immediacy of the problem; an-

other speaker quoted an authority on the subject to show the prevalence of the use of pep pills in secondary schools; the matter should be aired in the draft, another speaker said, if only to make teachers aware of the danger of victimisation to which primary pupils are especially liable. A delegate reminded the Group that the ED makes films on drug addiction available to schools. Another speaker felt that in addition to academic subjects, our schools should give lessons on the reality of life, alerting pupils to the dangers to which they may be exposed through bad books, films, etc; courses in social responsibility should be given. As a result of the discussion the Group decided that the problem of drugs should be dealt with in a special section on moral formation in schools.

The Group voted to cancel its next meeting, due to be held on July 8, and to anticipate the summer vacation. The Group will meet again on August 19, in Caritas Centre, Kowloon.

## LAIITY

ON Thursday, June 25, Group 4 discussed family organisations (Draft Document, §24). The first point debated was, who should organise such groups in the parish? One speaker strongly favoured the families organising themselves. Another said that the parish priest should at least encourage these organisations and establish them in collaboration with the families. Another thought the important thing was that such organisations be set up; who sets them up is of less importance. A delegate from Chaiwan then explained how the Christian Family Movement in his parish functions: there are four groups each comprising four or five married couples; they meet once a month in each other's houses, in turn, for 1½ hours, discuss problems dealing with Christian family living; occasionally in addition, they have special Masses, give talks in other parishes, go on picnics, etc. The movement in Chaiwan, he added, was started by the parish, but now the families themselves have taken over the initiative. The number of couples in each group has been kept small; the ordinary resettlement estate home would be unable to accommodate very many visitors, even when the hosts' children have been sent off to play.

A number of delegates present confessed they had no very clear idea of the Christian Family Movement; they seemed much impressed by the description of the Chaiwan experiment and asked that some few lines be added to the text of the document to explain what the CFM is. Not everybody, however, favoured the document's mentioning any specific organisation.

A member of the original drafting committee explained that the intention of the paragraph was to stress the need for family-type organisations, whether the OFM or some other. One speaker pointed out that such organisations seemed especially suited to a Chinese environment, where great importance has always been attached to the family.

A non-delegate was of the opinion that something should be said in the document about what the Christian family should be and about the witness its members should give of Christian love among themselves and for their neighbours. Another stressed that the examples of family services mentioned in the draft (baby-sitting pools, bus services for school children and servants, etc.) should not be confined just to Christian families; the document should insist rather on the missionary and apostolic aspect of these organisations, which ideally should bring Christian families together in order to serve others.

At this stage various proposals were made for improving the order of the paragraphs in this part of the document. A suggestion was also made to add a short description of neighbourhood customs in Hong Kong, of the contacts or lack thereof among people dwelling in the same block of flats. The delegate who made this proposal undertook to draw up a statement on this subject for discussion at the next meeting.

The following paragraph (§25) was accepted by the Group without discussion, and the debate moved on to the next section of the document entitled: Courses and Counselling. Among the views expressed on the first paragraph (§26) of this section were: the CMAC, our own specialist organisation on the family, should be mentioned earlier in the section; the name "Cana Conferences" ought to be changed; "health education for youths" refers to sex education and might be better expressed by saying "courses for youth in human relations between the sexes"; there are large areas concerning family life in which we do not differ in our outlook from other Christians or even from conscientious non-Christians: hence we should cooperate with others as much as possible; we cannot, of course, permit compromise on questions of principle, but if we set up our own parallel organisations there is the danger of our becoming inward-looking; an organisation like the CMAC gets its government subsidy more easily because it is known to be eager to cooperate with other. A final suggestion was for the addition of a section on the theology of sex: this would be a valuable contribution towards developing a lay spirituality of which there is a serious need today.