

Convention News

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

THE topic for discussion at the last meeting of Group 2 (July 7) was the liturgy as a factor in the formation of Christians. The recommendation around which the debate revolved has three parts, in the first of which two points are made: a) parishes should enjoy a certain autonomy to develop a liturgy that will be relevant to the life of the parishioners, and b) Communion under two species ought to be the normal rather than the exceptional practice.

The first delegate to speak opposed the suggestion that Communion under both species should be normal practice: it should be of infrequent occurrence in order to heighten the faithful's appreciation of it. A priest described how in his parish Holy Communion under two species had been made available to all who wished for a period of two months: very many, old as well as young, had availed themselves of the opportunity with gratifying results. Some of the parishioners had remarked that now they realised better that they were really sharing in the sacrifice of Christ, and had begun to remain behind after Mass to speak with one another, finding in their fellow parishioners brothers and sisters. Another priest pointed out that the occasions on which Communion under both species could be received were laid down by the Holy See and hence the Group should not waste time discussing something beyond their competence to decide. A third priest expressed surprise that the faithful should feel a sense of community only after receiving Communion under

both species: was this sense of community never felt during the centuries of Communion under one species? Surely, he added, we partake of the same sacrifice of Christ whether we receive under one or two species.

A number of speakers felt that this question should be left to the Liturgy Group and omitted from the present draft. Alternative proposals were made: to urge priests to lay more stress on the meaning of Holy Communion; to urge all to receive Communion as often as possible and under two species when available. Finally, in view of the fact that some priests seldom, if ever, administer Communion under both species, it was decided to recommend that "Communion under both species should be administered as often as possible and desirable."

The meeting then moved on to discuss the parish's autonomy in liturgical matters. One delegate thought the recommendation too vague and feared it might lead to confusion. Another felt the notion of liturgy should be clarified: today, he stated, it meant more than just the administration of the seven sacraments: it embraces every way in which man expresses himself in relation to God: this modern notion demands autonomy to enable man to give a living expression to community and individual relationship with God. Some speakers considered it was necessary to give the Liturgical Commission some control over liturgical experimentation, in order that such liturgy should be really relevant and meaningful for the parishioners. To ensure this relevancy a Sister proposed that the parish council should also be consulted. Various opinions were expressed as to how this outside control should be exercised. Is it sufficient to say that experimentation should be carried out "after consultation with the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, "or should the consent of this body be made a necessary condition? A priest pointed to the inconsistency of giving a person freedom to do something — but only with the consent of another. He felt the making of the mistakes which would inevitably result from full autonomy was a necessary step on the way to maturity and responsibility. However, the Group agreed with another speaker who maintained that "we are not yet in heaven but here down below" and therefore freedom must be placed within certain limits; by a large majority it was decided to recommend a restricted autonomy for parishes, so that the consent of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission is required before experiments in liturgical relevancy are put into practice.

The last topic discussed was the recommendation urging greater latitude for celebrating Mass in homes and elsewhere for small groups. Some speakers adverted to the practical difficulty of insufficient space in the homes of poorer parishioners and feared the way would thus be open to unwelcome class distinctions. Others stressed the advantages of celebrating the Eucharist in the home: the Eucharist is a family feast and the home is where the family lives; moreover this is how many parishes started; no matter how poor a home is, as long as the room is clean, Mass will be said there. Voting on this recommendation was postponed until the Group meets again after the summer recess.

LAITY

FROM whom should children receive sex education? This was the one of the main topics debated at the last meeting of Group 4 (July 9th), when the section of the draft document entitled Courses and Counselling came up for discussion. Ideally, it was agreed, sex education should be given by parents. But parents everywhere — and not just in Hong Kong — are shy of mentioning this subject to their children. This reticence perhaps results from not knowing how to tackle the problem, as a delegate, father of four, confessed. He suggested that courses be given to parents on how to impart sex education to their children. Parental difficulties might also arise from their own attitude to sex: those who look on sex as something shady instead of as something good and beautiful will have inhibitions when it comes to talking about sex to their offspring. Given this situation, the school has a role to play, at least with regard to the present generation of children. Perhaps when today's young people are themselves parents they will be well equipped to teach their own children.

What should be the role of the school in the matter of sex education? It still has an important part to play, but its role should only be secondary, that is, it should cooperate with parents, supplementing their efforts. The primary responsibility in sex education rests with parents, and this should be stressed. If the whole responsibility is left to secondary schools, how will the majority of Hong Kong's young people, who do not receive secondary education, get proper sex instruction?

A delegate connected with the CMAC warned against looking on sex education as merely the imparting of information: it is something much broader and deals principally with forming attitudes. Hence terms such as "education for life" or "education in relations between the sexes" ought to be used in preference to "sex education." It is all very well, he went on, to recommend that courses be given to young people in schools, to engaged couples and to married persons: but the practical difficulty arises: where are we to find qualified people to give these courses? Experience has shown that it is too late to reach young people when they are already engaged. Hence the aim of the CMAC is to reach young people of school age and thus to concentrate on the next generation of parents.

N.B. There will be no further meetings till August 17.—Report on 'Priestly Life' meeting (July 10) next week.