

## Convention News

**D**URING the fortnight from December 20 to January 2 there will be no fixed programme of Convention meetings. However, a number of Working Groups, aware of the amount of work that still remains to be done before Easter, will probably be unwilling to drop a meeting. The Conveners, after consulting the wishes of their Groups, may arrange to hold a meeting on some evening during these two weeks.

### LITURGY

**O**N Monday evening, November 23, Group 1 continued discussing the recommendations in the draft document aimed at promoting a biblical renewal, "without which it is impossible to take a truly active part in the liturgy of the word." Accepted without discussion were recommendations urging the use in all churches and religious communities of the ferial lectionary, as well as the continuance of the present practice of sending to priests a brief commentary on the Sunday scripture readings as a help in the preparation of the homily.

Another recommendation suggests that a short homily be preached also on weekdays, especially during Advent and Lent, and also on certain special occasions, such as baptisms, marriages, funerals. It was objected that it is much harder to preach a two-minute homily than a ten-minute one and that the labour involved in its preparation would not be worth while since so few attend weekday Mass. In spite of these objections the Group voted to retain the suggestion since a weekday homily not only gives people an inspiring thought to take away with them each day, but also serves to establish a bond between priest and people before the liturgy of the Eucharist starts.

Recommendation 8 commends bible services "especially in preparation for great feasts or during Advent and Lent," adding that "at times a lay person should be allowed to preside over the service, especially when a priest is not available." A priest-delegate was opposed to encouraging bible services; people will not come to Mass, he said, and they only want bible services because of their novelty. Some other speakers were opposed to allowing lay-people preside over bible services, or at least when these are held publicly in the parish church. A layman spoke up in favour of the proposal, saying that it was permitted in his parish. A priest thought it a good idea especially in smaller parishes where the parish priest might have to hear confessions during the service.

A suggestion was made to add a recommendation that a series of bible services be prepared and published for use in the diocese. Many spoke in favour of this proposal and felt rather shamefaced on being told that the CTS has in fact prepared upward of 50 bible services in Chinese!

The next recommendation

urges that "in all churches the bible should always be available to the faithful who want to adore the Blessed Sacrament and meditate on the word of God." Opposition was expressed by some who felt that, at least in some churches, the bible would never be read, that many do not even use the *Advent* sheet on Sundays; and that there are a number of practical difficulties in the way. However the consensus seemed to be that the suggestion was a good one since it would help towards educating the faithful to a better appreciation of the word of God.

The last recommendation to be discussed encourages family scripture readings and suggests that "in special seasons (Advent, Lent) a few families could gather together with the priest to study and meditate on the word of God." Delegates were in favour of this proposal as a way of helping the faithful to see the relevance of religion to their daily life. A priest described how this proposal had already been successfully put into practice in the parish of Tsuen Wan. A young layman thought that this is something that the laity could and should do on their own initiative and that the presence of a priest at such meetings is not indispensable. A final proposal urges that steps should be taken to ensure that there is a bible in every home.

### RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

**T**HE members of Group 2 at their last meeting (November 24) performed the enviable feat of getting through all the items on the agenda. And this after a prolonged discussion on the first topic—a recommendation urging "that children of primary school age not be baptised when parents are not." A number of speakers were opposed to any weakening of the force of the recommendation. They said that an act of faith is an adult act of which young children are incapable; that non-Catholic parents cannot nurture the faith of their children; that the example of the number of those baptised in their early years who give up the faith should give us pause.

Other speakers felt that the recommendation as it stands is too absolute and wanted some latitude to allow for special cases. Not all non-Catholic parents, a nun said, are completely unaware of what it is to be a Christian; those who themselves studied in a Catholic school will have sufficient appreciation of what Christianity means to be able to encourage their children to grow in the faith. Another speaker said we should not underestimate the ability of young children to make an act of faith—not an act of adult faith, but one corresponding to their psychological development. To refuse absolutely to baptize children of primary school age, a lay delegate declared, would entail the risk of losing many

potentially excellent Catholics.

The consensus of the meeting seemed to favour leaving the door open to exceptional cases. Several amendments were proposed and discussed. As a result of a series of votes the recommendation now reads: That, except for extraordinary cases, children of primary school age not be baptized when their parents are not; in these cases they should have their parents' permission and someone should be responsible for nurturing their faith.

A recommendation calling for the reorganisation of "the diocesan catechetical service for the formation of catechists . . . in order to meet our present school needs for well-trained catechists" was accepted.

A third recommendation was approved: that a unified policy for religious teaching in primary and secondary schools be clearly defined for the diocese, and that a diocesan body be given responsibility "to organize and sustain an all-round, systematic catechetical effort." In view of this it did not seem necessary to retain a further proposal recommending the setting up of "a post-Convention committee to prepare a detailed syllabus suitable for our Hong Kong group of children."

### EDUCATION

**T**HE delegates who attended the last meeting of Group 3 (November 25) discussed the section of the draft document dealing with the apostolate of higher education. The opening paragraph of this section speaks of Catholic student societies. The first speaker suggested adding the remark that these societies should examine their usefulness: were they perhaps defeating their own purpose by isolating Catholic students from the main student-body. He instanced the meeting last summer in Hong Kong of student representatives from all over Asia: while it was taking place Catholic students were holding their own meeting, thus ensuring the absence of an effective Catholic voice in the decision-making that really mattered. The suggestion, however, met with little support: a delegate felt that Catholic students will not be able to exercise a Christian influence unless they receive apostolic training, and they will not receive this if there are no Catholic societies.

Regarding the structure of Catholic student societies, another delegate praised the text where it speaks of the need for well-organized, cohesive groups exerting a dynamic influence in the different colleges. These individual societies could get valuable help from the Federa-

tion of Catholic student societies, but the principle of subsidiarity should not be neglected.

A number of speakers objected to going into too much detail about structure and programmes for these societies since it was agreed they are doing excellent work. What our document should stress, one delegate said, is the spiritual life of the students and the need for more, well prepared spiritual directors who should preferably be local-born and well versed in Chinese culture, in politics and economics.

The text next treats of the financial situation of these societies. After recommending that a solution should be sought through "the joint effort of students themselves in fund raising projects," it goes on to express the hope that the diocese of Hong Kong will contribute to student activities. Some speakers were opposed to this last suggestion. They felt that other student societies make do with the funds available from their own resources and from the student union; that students must learn that they too are expected to pay their own way; that the diocese has many more deserving causes to assist with a limited amount of funds. As against this it was pointed out that the student societies are still in their growing years and need help; that students are traditionally impecunious; that publications, which play a useful role, are costly ventures. On a vote it was decided to stress the need for student societies to raise their own funds, and to delete the reference to receiving help from the diocese.

The draft document also recommends that "more scholarships should be created by Catholic organisations to show the Catholic Church's concern for students." Speakers agreed that there is need for financial help for many students and especially for their families. But because this is a temporary need, delegates were opposed to aid being given in the form of scholarships. It was thought inappropriate, for instance, to give a generous scholarship to a final-year student who within a few months will be earning a salary of over \$1000 a month. University graduates are among the better paid of our citizens: financial help should therefore preferably be given them in their student days in the form of interest-free loans which, after graduation, they will find no difficulty in repaying. In addition to such loans it was decided to recommend that Catholic organisations be encouraged to help needy students by providing bursaries and part-time jobs.

### Programme of Working Group Meetings during Coming Week

Liturgy and Sacraments	Monday, December 7
Religious Instruction	Tuesday, December 8
Education	Wednesday, December 9
Laity	Thursday, December 10
Priestly Life	Friday, December 11

Place: Caritas Centre, Boundary Street, Kowloon.  
Time: 8 p.m.-10 p.m.