

Convention News

LITURGY

THE Diocesan Convention moved into 1971 with a meeting of Group 1 on January 4. Twenty-five persons attended this meeting and discussed the second half of the chapter of the draft document that deals with Liturgical Piety and Popular Devotions.

A propos of devotion to the saints, speakers pointed out that there is need for more instruction on how to venerate the saints properly; many non-Catholics, it was claimed, are put off by certain manifestations of devotion redolent of superstition. The Group was reminded that it is one of the functions of the Liturgy to serve as a model for extralitururgical devotions. Moreover the doctrine of the communion of saints provides a good opportunity of speaking about the saints, and in this connection it was suggested that people should be told that they can not only pray for their departed relatives and friends but to them also. Discussion on this point ended with the proposal that the draft ought contain some reference to ancestor-worship and its relationship to devotion to the saints.

In recent years a number of churches have undergone alterations which have included the removal of quite a few statues. A delegate remarked that many people regretted this latter-day form of iconoclasm, and quoted one who asked why a favourite statue had been removed and replaced by a crucifix.

The paragraph on the devotion of the First Fridays contains a description of devotion to the Sacred Heart that was thought to be a little too general. Since all devotions are directed to a person, devotion to the Sacred Heart might well be described as devotion to Christ who has loved us first, in order to distinguish this form from other forms of devotion to Christ our Lord. A speaker said that many Catholics hear vaguely about "the nine First Fridays" and get a wrong impression; people should be encouraged to attend Mass and receive Communion on first Fridays without worrying about not completing the series or, on the other hand, without attaching superstitious efficacy to a completed series of nine such Communions.

Regarding the devotion of the Way of the Cross, the draft document proposes a fifteenth station representing the Resurrection. Some speakers felt it inappropriate to separate the Resurrection of Christ from His Passion and Death. It was pointed out that the great message of the gospel is that Christ is risen; it is His Resurrection alone that gives meaning to His sufferings. However other delegates considered that the value of the devotion lies in exciting our compassion for the sufferings of Christ and that therefore we ought not introduce one of the glorious mysteries into our meditations on the sorrowful ones.

The final paragraph in this chapter of the draft deals with family liturgy and suggests the preparation of a booklet that would contain "family prayers,

family gatherings, simple bible vigils, the blessing of the home, the renewal of baptismal and marriage vows, prayers for the sick, the anointing of the sick, etc." The delegates agreed that liturgical devotions within the family circle should be encouraged since they would help prepare the faithful to participate more fully in parish liturgical celebrations. It was suggested that some forms of blessings reserved to fathers and mothers should be prepared. The Group also approved the proposal urging the celebration of Mass, on a trial basis, "in private homes on weekdays for a few families gathered together." It was thought that this practice would help to build up the parish community rather than fragment it.

At its next meeting (January 18) Group I will discuss Liturgy and Ecumenism.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Group 2 at its last meeting (January 5) continued its discussion of the chapter in the draft document on religious instruction in primary schools.

The delegates were generally satisfied with the section of this chapter dealing with catechists. A few minor clarifications were called for, e.g. a more careful distinguishing between the roles of catechist and RK teacher, and a simplification of some of the direct quotations from catechetical works found in the text.

The next topic in the chapter under discussion treats of the RK textbooks used in primary schools. Most — though not all — of the speakers were agreed on the need for new textbooks better adapted to our missionary situation. It was pointed out in addition that in view of the rapid changes taking place in so many aspects of life today a continual process of updating RK textbooks is necessary. Perhaps what we need, it was suggested, is a loose-leaf text which can be added to or subtracted from rather easily. Another speaker proposed the preparation of a series of weekly leaflets containing lesson plans. It was finally agreed to recommend in the document that any new textbook should be subjected to regular revision (every 3-5 years).

It was felt by a number of delegates that we must set down clearly in our recommendations whom we are addressing and whom we expect to carry out this work of preparing and revising textbooks. Experience in teaching (three years at least), professional expertise in catechetics and an intimate knowledge of the local situation were considered necessary qualifications for this work. Perhaps the most suitable people to assign to this task would be Hong Kong catechetical experts on their return from specialist training abroad. It was accordingly agreed to recommend that religious congregations be requested in the most urgent terms to release personnel as soon as possible to undertake this important work.

A counter proposal, namely merely to adapt and condense

existing textbooks instead of preparing new ones, if even only as a temporary stopgap measure, was defeated on a vote. It was felt that the Convention should be concerned with ideal long-term solutions to problems and not with makeshift proposals. Moreover it was pointed out that to work over an existing textbook is normally far more difficult than to start a new textbook from scratch.

The Group unanimously accepted the paragraph in the next section which states that the gospel message "has to be proclaimed in a language all children can understand, namely their mother tongue." A practical difficulty in the case of anglo-chinese schools was mentioned; but one speaker pointed out that already many such schools conduct their RK classes through Chinese.

The final paragraphs of this chapter deal with visual aids and mass communications. The material contained in the draft document was found satisfactory. The only question raised concerned the accuracy of a statement claiming that "the influence of mass communication in regard to the ideas of the pupils is seventeen times as great as that of lessons."

The four recommendations corresponding to this section of the draft were likewise accepted. The points urged in three of them are already being undertaken, it was said, and hopes were expressed that the remaining one, urging the early study of the possibilities offered by ETV, should be given earnest consideration.

EDUCATION

The section of the report on the apostolate of higher education which deals with the leakage problem among post-secondary and university students was discussed by Group 3 at a meeting held on January 6.

At an earlier meeting it had been decided to approach this section in a more positive way, by treating what could help to consolidate the religious life of students. That much has to be done in this area, was the opinion of one delegate who claimed that, in general, secondary school students have a better grasp of their religion than university students. The problem, he said, is that students while they become ever more literate in profane subjects, remain mostly illiterate in matters of religion.

The draft proposes four steps aimed at helping the religious formation of Catholics in post-secondary colleges: (1) religion should be expressed in a way that Hong Kong students can really understand; (2) help should be given in solving problems arising from controversy about religious and scientific questions; (3) a more acceptable public image of the Church should be presented, and misunderstandings in the areas of liturgy and administration removed; (4) more encouraging activities to deepen the knowledge of religion should be organised.

These proposals were accepted in the main. In discussing them a number of issues were raised: what is so special about Hong Kong students and how do they differ from their counterparts elsewhere? Would it be possible to ask post-secondary colleges to arrange religion courses for Catholic students,

similar to those offered, for instance, in colleges in America? What are the difficulties that students have regarding liturgy and Church administration? (A delegate suggested in reply that students think the liturgy is old fashioned and that priests are "mere functionaries".)

Some time was spent debating to whom these recommendations should be addressed. Following a lengthy exchange of ideas it was decided that the people who should be made responsible for carrying out these proposals are student chaplains, the wardens of Catholic hostels, the FCS and Pax Romana.

PRIESTLY LIFE

Group 5 concluded its discussions on its draft document at a meeting on January 8. At this meeting the first topic discussed was the priest and tourism in Hong Kong.

After various points of view had been voiced it was decided to prepare a short statement which would bring out these three aspects of the problem: (a) care for the spiritual needs of strangers to Hong Kong who spend a short time among us; (b) the formation of Catholics engaged in the tourist industry, who should be alerted to the possibilities provided them of giving Christian witness to those with whom their work brings them into contact; and (c) preparing the youth of Hong Kong to be able, with the greatest profit to themselves and others, to visit various parts of the world as tourists.

The Group also expressed the wish that there should be something in the document (perhaps in the form of an appendix) on the life of seminarians, tomorrow's priests. The difficulty of writing something that does not quickly become outdated was faced. It was therefore decided to ask those in charge of the seminary to prepare a brief paragraph in which the image of the post-Vatican II priest as described in the earlier part of the document is brought out, and the principle laid down that the style of life of the seminary should be such as to prepare seminarians to become priests who will measure up to these exacting standards.

Two other points were briefly touched on: the question of priestly dress and the preparation of a directorium for priests.

The next meeting of Group 5 will take place when the drafting committee is in a position to present to the delegates the fruit of their labours.

Programme of Working Group Meetings during Coming Week

Liturgy and Sacraments	Monday, January 18
Religious Instruction	Tuesday, January 19
Education	Wednesday, January 20
Laity	Thursday, January 21
Priestly Life	(No Meeting)