

# Convention News

## LITURGY

At the beginning of the last meeting of Group 1 (February 8) the Convener reminded the delegates present of the need for moving ahead with the discussion with all deliberate speed. Four more chapters remain to be studied, he warned them, and there are only four meetings left before Easter.

Two recommendations from the chapter on Liturgy and Ecumenism had been left over from the previous meeting. These were now discussed. They both deal with baptism: the first recommends that the partners of a mixed marriage take an active role in the baptismal ceremony of their children and goes on to point out that the non-Catholic parent need not make any of the responses during the rite which seem to him contrary to his faith. The second recommendation deals with "the reception of Christians baptised in various denominations", and states that these are not to be conditionally baptised unless, after careful investigation, serious doubts persist about the validity of the previous ceremony. These two proposals provoked little comment. One delegate asked for a clear statement that we take for granted the validity of the baptism conferred in other Christian Churches. With this addition the two recommendations were accepted.

The Group then went on to discuss Liturgy and Evangelization. The draft document touches on this topic in a few places and it had been decided earlier to collect these scattered references into a special chapter. The text of this new chapter was distributed to the members at the meeting but was felt to be a little too thin. It was decided therefore to request the redrafting committee to expand the text somewhat, and to postpone discussion until this revised version is ready.

Chapter 11 of the draft deals with liturgical formation. This was the next theme to be taken up. The four introductory paragraphs of the chapter point out mainly what the liturgy is not: "it should never be understood as the teaching of good manners when in church; neither should it be considered merely as what to say or sing at Mass". To some these paragraphs seemed a little too negative. One speaker pointed out that only with a great deal of patient effort can a liturgically active community be built up, and suggested that the text should state in a few words what our ideal of a liturgically active community is.

After these few paragraphs the chapter deals with in turn liturgical formation on the parish level, in religious communities, in schools and seminaries. It ends with a section on the clergy and the liturgical life.

The points raised in the first section on liturgical formation on the parish level were found generally acceptable. Delegates expressed their satisfaction with the stress laid on the need for fostering a sense of community in the parish by means of the liturgy and with the recommendation urging that "efforts should be made to link welfare activities with the liturgy."

The section on religious communities deals mostly with the liturgical celebrations within the community and refers only very briefly to religious taking part in the liturgical life of the parish to which they belong. A delegate, while ad-

mitting the importance of both these points, felt that the second is not given sufficient attention in the text and proposed that it should be dealt with more fully.

The liturgical formation of school students is dealt with in a brief paragraph in which we are reminded that "a systematic programme (which includes both theoretical and practical instruction in suitable celebrations) is a necessity for the complete Christian formation of young people." Some speakers referred to the already overcrowded RK syllabus, to the lack of suitable textbooks on the liturgy, to the fact that the RK syllabus has to be drawn up in agreement with other Christian bodies. Other delegates felt a recommendation should be addressed to the Liturgical Commission to suggest a model syllabus and prepare leaflets containing specimen lessons. One speaker thought that the text should give concrete examples of activities (e.g. liturgical camps, competitions) which would help in the liturgical formation of students; another insisted on the need first to train teachers in the liturgy.

The section on liturgical formation in the seminary makes five practical observations. Some speakers felt that these entered into too great detail and encroached on the proper autonomy of the seminary authorities. Others took exception to the suggestion that "the seminary could be an appropriate place to carry out useful liturgical experimentation for the whole diocese." One speaker objected to the seminarians "being used as guinea pigs", and spoke of the harm that might ensue for all concerned from pursuing such a policy. Other speakers disagreed: one felt that if there was to be experimentation, then the seminary was the proper place for it, since the seminarians might be expected to be liturgically mature. Another gave an example of a successful experiment (a Penitential Service) that had been carried out in the seminary. If people object to the world "experimentation" as being too cold-blooded, a delegate said, why not speak of "liturgical rehearsals" instead?

A final point: a priest suggested stressing the need to develop in the seminarians an attitude of reverence for the liturgy; future priests should be reminded that the liturgical rites are not their private property to be used as they themselves think best; the priest in carrying out liturgical functions acts in the name of the Church.

The remaining section of this chapter, the liturgical formation of the clergy, will be discussed at the next meeting.

## EDUCATION

The delegates of Group 3 at their latest meeting (February 10) discussed the chapter of the draft document dealing with Family Life Education.

The draft, in introducing this topic, which is otherwise known as sex education, declares that "we are not dealing narrowly or exclusively with anatomical and physiological details. We are concerned also with attitudes, with personality development, with the very process of awakening of the child's mind. We are concerned with human values, with ethical situations,

with instinct and curiosity and trust." The first question put to the delegates was whether a course conceived along these broad lines should be introduced into our schools.

One or two delegates were not very enthusiastic. They pointed to the difficulties involved: would there be teachers available to give these lessons? Could, for instance, a maths teacher turn his hand successfully to this subject? Schools are already carrying a full load of some forty periods per week: where could such a new course be fitted in?

Other speakers insisted that some kind of sex education will sooner or later be introduced into Hong Kong schools, whether we like it or not. Hence the sensible thing for our schools to do is to start a course along the lines mentioned in the draft document, and to do this as soon as possible so that it will be a going concern by the time the ED decides to extend a course in sex education to all Hong Kong schools. Then, if our course has proved a success, it might easily become a model for other schools to copy.

The meeting, having accepted in principle the recommendation urging the introduction of family life education into our schools, went on to discuss three proposals concerning its implementation. The first of these proposals suggests, as a preparatory step, initiating dialogue among the teachers of each school. Many teachers, it was alleged, do not feel "free, familiar or inclined to discuss these matters." A nun, however, thought that this dialogue might be more usefully carried on first on the level of school principals among themselves: they will be in a position to know what can be expected of their teachers and will be able to pass on to them relevant ideas that are brought up in the course of conversations with other school heads.

Another delegate asked for a clarification of the purpose of the proposed dialogue. In answer it was suggested that it aims at changing the attitudes of teachers, to make them more at ease in dealing with the subject of family life, and to enable "the school population" to determine what will be the best policy to suit its own special needs.

A second recommendation proposes entering into dialogue with the parents of the students attending the school. Here a delegate raised the problem: what if the parents object to their children attending a course in family life education? Will the school teach it in spite of their reservations? Another speaker mentioned how sensitive the ED is to the wishes of parents in this area. Letters have been written to the newspapers setting out parent's objections, a Sister-delegate pointed out; but, she said, there is a silent majority of parents who want their children instructed in this subject. As a result of the debate, it was decided to add to the recommendation a reminder to schools to be careful to respect the wishes of parents on this delicate issue.

The third proposal urges the diocese to provide "a person who could assist schools, e.g. talk with staff, advise suitable visual aids and reading materials, organize seminars, talk to students . . . . An alternate may be to supplement the CMAC budget and personnel, since they are pioneers in the field to date." The consensus of the meeting seemed to lean towards appointing a salaried person to help schools in family life education programmes, since — as one nun put it — it would be a formidable request to make of the CMAC to look after the needs of all our schools.

## LAITY

GROUP 4 held what its member piously hoped would be their final meeting on February 11. They discussed the section of their draft document entitled Lay Associations: Organization and Personnel.

Among the points in the opening paragraphs of this section that provoked comment was a statement that "wherever feasible mixed associations (i.e. of men and women) are recommended." A delegate said that this seems a little too sweeping. A number of associations exclusive to either sex exist and for good reasons. It would be a pity therefore to set down anything in the draft that might seem to suggest that their usefulness had come to an end.

Another proposal in the text that drew fire was that of setting up a commission in the diocese "to survey and examine the structure and function of all lay associations, in the spirit of renewal." Some speakers thought that the responsibility for renewal rests primarily upon the associations themselves; and that it is always painful to have something imposed on them from outside. A proposal was accepted to amend the text to state that "lay associations might be helped by a commission set up by the bishop in their efforts to revitalize their work and evaluate their objectives against the needs of the modern world . . . and to put to efficient use the resources of the lay apostolate in order to best serve the needs of the local Church."

The next paragraph of the draft led to a lively exchange of views. The text lists a number of criticisms raised against the Legion of Mary, points out the difficulty encountered in finding spiritual directors "available and zealous in this apostolic activity", and concludes that "there seems a crying need for updating this association, possibly under a Bishop's Commission, to bring this active force of the apostolate into more effective use and to adopt more efficient techniques of evangelization."

The Legion did not lack doughty defenders. One suggested that the paragraph under discussion was simply false and hence that it would be a waste of time to discuss it. The Legion, it was asserted, is the most modern association in the Church. When founded it was more than 40 years ahead of its time. In its methods and organization it corresponds exactly to the Vatican Council's ideal

## Programme of Working Group Meetings during Coming Week

Liturgy and Sacraments	Monday, February 22
Social Mission of Church	Tuesday, February 23
Religious Instruction	Tuesday, February 23
Education	Wednesday, February 24
Laity	Thursday, February 25

(Catholic Centre)  
Government of Diocese Friday, February 26  
Place: Caritas Centre, Boundary Street, Kowloon  
Time: 8 p.m.-10 p.m.