

Convention News

LITURGY

THE final meeting of Group 1 took place on March 8. The Group will not come together again until the Redrafting Committee has completed its work of revising the document.

The last two chapters to be discussed deal with liturgical adaptations and experiments, and the function of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

The chapter on adaptation and experimentation contains a short introduction and six practical suggestions. One speaker criticized the Introduction for being too belligerent in tone

and almost compelling the reader to take sides between lawless diversity and rigid uniformity. Another speaker faulted the paragraph for implying that it would be proper to admit a diversity in liturgical practice between different parishes that would extend beyond the legitimate use of the various options already provided for in the liturgy. Wider differences, he felt, which might be wholly commendable between one nation — or even one diocese — and another, could not be countenanced between different parishes of one diocese.

Another delegate offered an alternative proposal for the Introduction: it should start with a few short quotations from Vatican II, stressing the importance of adaptation; these should be followed by three principles which apply to all adaptation: a) liturgical adaptation should correspond to the genuine traditions of the people; b) adaptation should help to make the liturgy more familiar and more immediately comprehensible; c) wherever general national usage or tradition provides a custom or symbol more familiar than the one used at present, it should be adopted. (e.g. a Chinese mode of greeting at Pax rather than western handshake).

In the debate two trends appeared. Some favoured a good deal of experiment, saying that so far no real serious, solid experimentation has been carried on in the diocese; others were a good deal more cautious and asked for definite safeguards, especially for episcopal authorization. Another speaker considered this could be done better by first clarifying the aim of every experiment made in the interests of adaption: it should aim at a genuine renewal of the liturgy with the needs of the faithful foremost in mind; experimentation should not be confused with a search for liturgical novelty, where the priest is thinking more of himself and of the effect he is having on the congregation.

Moving on to the practical points, the Group approved of the proposed establishment of a Liturgical-Pastoral Centre in the diocese to be responsible for liturgical adaptation and experiment. They preferred to omit a paragraph which mentions certain difficulties in the way of adaptation (e.g. shortage of suitably translated scripture texts; difficulty in composing hymns in Chinese style).

A number of letters sent to the Convention appealed for consideration to be given to the liturgical needs of minority groups; the Portuguese and Pakistanis were singled out for special mention. Speakers thought that these groups should rather be encouraged to integrate with the majority or at most should be given facilities for celebrating the liturgy in the way approved by their national hierarchies: it seems unrealistic to expect the diocese to adapt the liturgy to suit the conflicting liturgical tastes

of the large number of minority groups to be found in Hong Kong.

What suggestions should the Convention make to the Diocesan Liturgical Commission? This is the topic that the final chapter of the draft deals with. Some speakers favoured making fairly detailed proposals; others were opposed to this and asked whether it was necessary, for example, to recommend that a Chinese priest be assigned full-time to the Liturgical Commission: that he should know Latin and English and remain in contact with the pastoral needs of the faithful.

After some discussion it was agreed to recommend in a rather general way that the Liturgical Commission should be properly staffed, properly financed and enjoy clearly defined authority. Some points, it was maintained, particularly need clarification: the dependence of our diocese on Taiwan in matters liturgical and the relationship between the Liturgical Commission and the Pastoral Council and Curia.

At the end of the meeting the Convener thanked the delegates for their fidelity in attending the meetings and for their contribution to the discussions.

EDUCATION

In view of the near approach of Easter, the delegates of Group 3 at their most recent meeting (March 10) decided to spend little time discussing two chapters of the draft dealing with technical matters: Special Education and Adult Education. They felt that the recommendations contained in these two chapters deserved careful study but considered themselves incapable of judging the issues involved. Accordingly they approved of recommendations found in both chapters urging the setting up of special groups to study the problems outlined in the draft and to report to the proper authorities.

Having thus disposed of these two chapters, the Group went on to debate the far more controverted chapter entitled Staff and Administration. The main aim of the subcommittee which undertook the preparation of this chapter was "to gather the views from its members and their colleagues on various problems pertaining to the relationship between staff and administration . . . and to present certain weakness in some Catholic institutes of learning." The text later goes on to observe that "misunderstanding between the lay staff and the religious administrators has often become the cause of conflict and frustration."

Much of the discussion centred around the respective roles of school supervisor and school principal. Speakers were of the opinion that an important cause of the inharmonious relations between staff and administration reflected in the chapter is the undefined role of the supervisor. His responsibilities are nowhere accurately defined; they are interpreted differently

Programme of Working Group Meetings during Coming Week

Liturgy and Sacraments	(No Meeting)
Religious	Monday, March 22
Religious Instruction	Tuesday, March 23
Social Mission of Church	Tuesday, March 23
Education	Wednesday, March 24
Laité	(No Meeting)
Government of Diocese	Friday, March 26

Place: Catholic Centre, Hong Kong.
Time: 8 p.m.—10 p.m.

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GOVERNMENT OF DIOCESE

by different supervisors. Human nature being what it is, the supervisor is often tempted to enlarge his sphere of influence and encroach on areas the principal thinks should be left to him. Therefore to remove this major irritant of staff-administration relations the role of supervisor, it was felt, needs to be clearly defined.

Some maintained that this work of clarification should be entrusted to the Catholic Education Council. One delegate objected, saying that the CEC has no authority to delimit the roles of supervisor and principal; and in the absence of such authority it would be a waste of time to attempt to make careful distinctions. Others however thought that a clear statement by the CEC of what should be considered the ideal situation would be of great value. It would exert a healthy moral pressure on administrators inclined to take too much responsibility on their own shoulders. In the end a motion calling on the CEC "to give practical guidelines to Catholic schools on the respective roles of supervisor and principal" was passed.

A teacher-delegate pointed out that some religious do not make good supervisors; he therefore asked for a recommendation to urge that only those with professional training or knowledge be appointed to this office. A priest-delegate wanted to know in what this professional training consists. In his view all a supervisor needs to enable him "to run the school" is a good knowledge of the Education Ordinance. As for professional qualifications, this delegate held that seven years of philosophical and theological studies (during which a certain amount of psychology is learned) are more useful than "a piece of paper" from a College of Education.

Another recommendation in the text proposes that "a board of supervisors (i.e. a group of 5 competent religious educators) should be formed within each religious order to take charge of all schools run by the same order, to replace the present supervisory system, for the purpose of formulating and coordinating all school policies". In favour of this it was pointed out how useful it would be for such a board to work out a common policy for schools run by the same order; indeed a similar board should be set up also for schools run by the diocese. On the other hand it was contended that the recommendation runs counter to the present-day trend away from centralization; that it would tend to stifle initiative and lead to sterile uniformity. Our motto should rather be to let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools contend. After further debate it was decided by vote to omit the recommendation.

Two other recommendations were passed. One urges the CEC to assume a more positive role in coordination work among Catholic schools. The other recommends that membership of the CEC should not be confined to principals but should include (lay) teachers also. Discussion on this chapter will continue at the next meeting (March 24).

GROUP 10 brought the discussion of its long document to an end at a meeting on March 12. The delegates will come together once more (March 26) to give their final verdict on the revised draft, which it is confidently expected will be completed by then.

The last topic to be discussed was the reorganization of the parish; this is dealt with in Appendix II of the draft document.

Little time was spent on arriving at a decision to omit those paragraphs in the text which describe the traditional system of parishes. They seemed unnecessary in view of the statement later on in the draft that the bishop now enjoys wide powers in the diocese to "alter the present canonical structures of the parish as he sees fit and experiment with new structures, in order to find out those most suited to his diocese and to each differing group of Christians".

It was agreed that the great changes that have taken place in the last few decades, such as urbanization, secularization, sheer increase in numbers, progress in communications and in science and technology, demand corresponding changes in Church structures. The inadequacy of the traditional parish structure has long been felt. It was not so easy, however, to decide on what new structures to suggest to replace the old.

A number of parish priests present at the meeting gave their views. The suggestions contained in the text were also examined. Finally it was decided to approach the problem in rather general terms.

The revised document will therefore start with an acknowledgement of the usefulness of the territorial parish, which has still much to recommend it. There will then be a recommendation encouraging serious study of possible new structures radically different from the traditional type of parish. New forms that have proved successful elsewhere might be adapted to the Hong Kong scene. Hence we should not be afraid to experiment. Since however in the foreseeable future it is unlikely that very radical changes will come about, we should examine what can be done to improve the existing structures. Speakers were generally in favour of more teamwork. One delegate envisaged perhaps 10 priests living together in one place: during the day each would look after the pastoral needs of those living in a block of flats which would be his special responsibility. Mention was made of an outreach programme where a priest would let it be known that at certain fixed times he would be present in out-of-the-way corners of the parish from which parishioners find it hard to come to him. Priests could also be given responsibility for different fields (e.g. youth, education, welfare) within an area covering a number of parishes. Here again bold experiment in new forms was recommended.

Finally a number of other points found in the draft were approved: the setting up where it does not exist of effective

parish councils which would be a genuine exercise in collegiality and co-responsibility; the publicizing of parish accounts since "the faithful have the right to know what is being done with their money;" and greater stress on social activities since "the parish is not meant only to foster liturgical renewal and unity of worship in the People of God but is meant to carry out the entire complex of the teaching and saving mission of the Church in all its aspects: conversion, Christian life, education, youth, family, labour, health welfare, civics, ecumenism, etc."