

THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

HOLY FATHER CREATES NEW RP DIOCESE

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has officially announced the creation of the province of San Fernando, La Union to a diocese by the Holy See. Until recently, the archdiocese of Nueva Segovia comprises the civil province of Ilocos Sur and La Union.

At the same time, the Holy Father has named His excellency, Monsignor Victorino Ligot as the Bishop of the new diocese. A native of Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Bishop Ligot served in the parishes of Ilocos Norte and became the first Vicar General when the diocese of Laoag was created in 1961. He was appointed auxiliary bishop of Nueva Segovia on February 14, 1969.

SERVANT OF THE DYING CANONIZED

The Pope on January 25 canonized Maria Soledad Torres Acosta, foundress of the Sisters Servants of Mary, who dedicated her life to caring for the most hopelessly ill.

At the canonization ceremony the Pope celebrated Mass, distributed Communion and pronounced the solemn words recognizing in the Church's name the holiness of Blessed Maria.

Maria Soledad Torres Acosta was born in Madrid in 1826. In her youth she made the solemn vow to dedicate her life to those so desperately ill that even the hospitals refused to care for them. At the age of 25 she convinced six other women to join in this work, but they soon left her because they could not endure the hardships. Her bishop, noting the exemplary virtues of Maria, put her under his protection. She was thus able to found the Sisters Servants of Mary. She died in 1887.

Today her congregation has 122 houses and 2,650 members throughout the world.

PRIESTLY LIFE AND PARISH

The Senate of Priests of the Christchurch diocese (New Zealand) has adopted an important report on the priesthood and parish life made by a special committee and has sent a series of recommendations to its bishop.

The recommendations range over most facets of priestly life, from leadership in the parish community to disputes with parish councils — and pay particular attention to establishing close relations between pastors and their assistants.

Priests and leadership

The priest's exercise of leadership is increasingly inspirational and non-directive the report said. The priest is concerned with supporting the efforts of the people in carrying out their mission. Despite the changing role and functions of the priests today, the new situation that faces him offers a challenging and rewarding life for dedicated priests.

"As always he is called on to lead his people in the community, expressing its faith in its official worship. Although not specifically trained for this new role, we will find added strength in adapting to it if we explore together our understanding of our new role and if we support one another in discharging it," the report said.

The report did not proffer any solutions, but quoting from the theological review *Concilium*, it said that, in acting, priests should bear in mind that the "question facing the Church today as a whole, that is, its hierarchy and its faithful, is simply this: Is it ready to read the signs of the times and to study the problem while it still has thousands of priests in its service, or will it sit back and wait until the problem has taken on the proportions of a major crisis?"

In the past, it said, ideas, suggestions and initiatives came from the leader. Now leadership comes not from above but from within. It is a shared responsibility.

"Today we recognize that there is a variety of roles, functions and ministries within a parish, "Rather than any one person being more responsible than all the others, all together have a shared responsibility for the mission of the parish."

In this situation, the report saw the role of the priest as a unifying influence, the exercise of this influence is the greatest act of leadership needed from him.

At the same time, the priest must be out in front of the parish community, pointing the way, challenging the assumptions of parishioners and endeavoring to discern where the Gospel demands are leading the community.

Settlement of disputes

There may well arise times of tension, especially when priest and parish council cannot agree. Here the report suggests that, where there is a deadlock, representatives of both, and possibly a third and independent person, should discuss the deadlock and seek a decision.

What should not be done is to attempt to diminish the meaning of the partnership and shared responsibility between priest and people by immediate recourse to legal authority. Where conciliation is agreed on, parties should bind themselves to accept the decision.

In cases in which an appeal is made to authority, both sides should agree to approach the authority; neither side should make the approach without the agreement of the other.

All parishioners should have a responsible part in the decision-making and structures. Specially selected councils must be set up to foster this.

Turning to their own problems, the priests made a series of recommendations including the following:

Priests should reflect on their style of life — their cars, personal possessions and recreations — to see whether they do in fact witness to the Gospel values. For instance, "priests should take care, in the light of being the Church of the poor, to have second thoughts on buying large cars ... In an age of affluence the witness of poverty is a positive affirmation of the Gospel values. "Priests are called, like all Christians, to witness to poverty in their lives. It would seem that the modern witness is not one of deprivation or indigence, but a real and genuine detachment from material possessions. And this should also apply to the Church as an institution in buildings and property."

- Priests' appointments are critical in their lives and they should be consulted on them.

- Personal fulfillment must be found to a significant degree in a priest's work "because if the structures within which he lives diminish his responsibility and dignity as a man, they diminish also his life and effectiveness as a priest. He who is not fully a man is not able to be fully a priest ... The Church in developing its organization must take this into account."

- The Priests' relationship with their bishop "should be that of brothers and collaborators in a shared responsibility for the Church's mission.

- Priests should not be made to conform to a single priestly pattern.

- The special importance of the spiritual director in a seminary in the formation of priests should be noted.

Presbytery life

The final section of the report looked at tensions within rectories, and suggested that there be "structured dialogue" in each and suggested staff meetings as a way of achieving this.

Priests, should be free to choose where they will go for their annual holidays; the rectory should be the home of all priests, and assistant pastors should be able to entertain their friends there.

Assistants, should be free to set up organizations approved in the diocese after discussing them with the pastor, and they should also feel free to experiment with forms of the apostolate after discussing them with other priests.

This report will almost certainly be implemented: Bishop Brian P. Ashby of Christ church has an outstanding record of cooperation with his priests and people.

AGREEMENT ON BAPTISM REACHED IN SCOTLAND

The Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church in Scotland have agreed to honour each other's baptism rite and to appoint liturgical commissions to draw up a common rite of baptism.

Father James Quinn, S.J., of Edinburgh, a consultor for the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, described the joint report on baptism as "an ecumenical landmark of wide importance. The report will have an impact beyond the two Churches immediately concerned."

The Very Rev. Provost A. I. M. Haggart of the Episcopal Church said: "We found ourselves talking the same language, with no emotional overtones. The report is a definite step forward. Agreement on baptism is a fundamental prerequisite for a continued growing together of the two Churches."

The report prepared by a joint study group of 24 clergy and laymen, was approved by the provincial synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church and by the Scottish Bishops' Conference.

Each Church has recognized the reality of the other's baptism, unless there is proved individual "eccentricity" on the part of the person administering the sacrament.

Liturgical commissions are to explore a common text for a common rite of baptism to be used separately in each Church. Approval has been given for the preparation of a common certificate of baptism, which can be used when either Church requests the other to provide official evidence of baptism.

CATHOLIC PRESS DUTIES

A summary of preliminary consensus and recommendations for further discussion was drawn at a meeting of bishops and editors at Bergamo Centre on December 3-5, 1969.

The basic purpose of the diocesan press is to enlighten the Catholic about his world and his role in it. The diocesan press fulfill this purpose:

1. By interpreting fully, fairly and accurately the events of the day as they relate to the Christian in his community.

2. By helping to create that community.
3. By informing and instructing its readers.
4. By reflecting the prophetic mission of the Church, through exhortation and inspiration.
5. By helping readers to see God speaking to man in the events of the times.
6. By a process of continuing education leading to an enlightened public opinion.
7. By providing a forum for dialogue within the body of the Church.
8. By helping to fulfill the bishop's obligation to teach and instruct the people of God... and to hear them in return.
9. By striving to convey the Christian meaning of human events to all segments of the general community.

In order to achieve the above, there must be a definition of the roles of publisher and editor, a mutual trust and understanding and frequent direct communication between them. It was recommended that the bishop-publisher consider sharing his responsibility through establishment of a board, widely representative of the diocese as a whole, to assist both publisher and editor in producing a better newspaper. The editor must recognize the bishop's pastoral responsibility and bishop must recognize the editor's necessary freedom. Both should recognize that the right to information is a right of the reader which should not be abridged.

Reporting news involves good news and bad, joys and sorrows, order and disorder. In this regard Pope Paul VI told members of the Catholic Press: "Your professional conscience can impose on you the duty of reporting untoward happenings which occur in certain areas of the ecclesial community. But it also obliges you to put them in proper perspective and not to exaggerate them, and above all not to give the impression that you approve them, or that you try to justify them, especially when the magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) and the entire tradition of the Church reproves them."