



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NCCB, POLISH NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH, HOLD SEMIANNUAL MEETING

WASHINGTON--The official dialogue between the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) held its semiannual meeting at the Washington Retreat House here, October 23-24, under the joint chairmanship of Bishop James C. Timlin of Scranton and Right Reverend Anthony M. Rysz, Bishop of the Central Diocese of the Polish National Catholic Church.

The PNCC delegation also included Right Reverend Thaddeus Peplowski (Bishop of the Buffalo-Pittsburgh diocese), Very Reverend Stanley Skrzypek, Very Reverend Sigmund Peplowski, Reverend A. Wayne Kargul, and Very Reverend Marcell W. Pytlarz. NCCB participants included Most Reverend Alfred Abramowicz, former Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Reverend Joseph F. Mytych of St. Blase church, Argo, Illinois, and, from the NCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Reverend John Hotchkin and Reverend Ronald Roberson, CSP. Most Reverend Edward M. Grosz, Auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo, and Most Reverend Alfred J. Markiewicz, Bishop of Kalamazoo, were unable to attend.

The dialogue began with a presentation on the canonical status of Catholics who leave their church and join the PNCC. Papers were given by two canon law professors at the Catholic University of America, Rev. Thomas Green and Rev. Chorbishop John Faris.

Father Pytlarz gave a paper on "Development of the Married Priesthood in the Polish National Catholic Church." He described the initial resistance to the idea of married priesthood in the years following the PNCC's establishment in 1897, and the process leading to the abrogation of compulsory celibacy for the clergy at the fourth General Synod of the PNCC in 1921. The

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PNCC view is that while this action is consonant with the tradition of the Church, it was not intended to question the value of celibacy in the lives of those who are called to it.

A paper on the spiritual formation of clergy in the PNCC was presented by Father Kargul. He described priestly spirituality as it existed in the Polish immigrant community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the development of the image of the priest in the PNCC, the establishment of a seminary in Scranton, PA, and the prospect of future cooperation with other churches in the formation of PNCC priests.

Father Skrzypek gave a presentation on the PNCC's relationship to the Union of Utrecht in light of the ordination of two women to the priesthood by the Old Catholic Bishop of Germany. The PNCC broke communion with the church in Germany immediately after the ordination took place. This has required a restructuring of the Utrecht Union and the manner in which the member churches relate to one another. Father Skrzypek also described recent developments in relations of the Utrecht Union with the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

Bishop Rysz reported on preparations for the celebration of the centennial of the foundation of the PNCC in 1997. Each diocese is to have its own commemoration and it is hoped there will be significant Roman Catholic participation in these events.

Topics to be discussed at future meetings were also considered. Among these were the theological underpinnings of the unity shared by the Roman Catholic and PNCC churches, the question of mixed marriages, concrete models of cooperation between the churches, and possible models of unity. The dialogue also anticipates an examination of the petrine ministry in light of the invitation to discuss the papacy extended by Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*.

The next meeting is to take place on May 6-7, 1997, at Sts. Peter and Paul PNCC parish in Passaic, New Jersey.

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