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CATHOLIC, LUTHERANS MARK REFORMATION

(Note to editors: The following release was prepared by a Roman Catholic-Lutheran committee and is being released jointly by the Lutheran Reformation Anniversary Committee in New York and by the U. S. Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in Washington, D. C.)

Washington -- To mark the 450th Reformation anniversary top-level Roman Catholic and Lutheran scholars will engage in major theological discussions in 14 American cities during the 1967-1968 academic year.

At its semi-annual meeting in Chicago this past April the National Conference of Catholic Bishops expressed its confidence in the willingness of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs to accept an invitation extended earlier by the Lutheran Reformation Anniversary Committee to observe the anniversary with joint projects.

Under the direction of a joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran committee plans are being made for theological discussions in those cities with strong Catholic and Lutheran theological resources. Cities suggested for the dialogues include Austin (Texas), Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Columbus (Ohio), Denver, Detroit,

Minneapolis-St. Paul, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San-Francisco, and Seattle.

Major topics chosen for discussion are: "The Biblical Concept of Faith," "The Church's Life in Worship," "The Role of the Bible in the Church," and "The Nature of the Church."

It is suggested that scholars also explore the Reformation issues from the perspective of the contemporary situation and investigate possibilities of more extensive interdenominational cooperation in meeting current challenges common to all churches in the spirit of Christian love and doctrinal integrity.

In addition to dialogues, plans are being made to present jointly prepared radio and television programs and to make mutual use of the arts to emphasize the church's continual need for renewal and reform.

In his response to the invitation extended by the Lutheran Reformation anniversary committee, Bishop John J. Carberry, Columbus, Ohio, chairman of the Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, stated, "Our Commission has received the necessary expression of confidence from the hierarchy. Our Committee responds most prayerfully and sincerely to the very cordial and prayerful invitation of the representatives of the Lutheran Churches and it recommends the proposed conferences and ecumenical prayer gatherings to be conducted under the guidance of the local Lutheran and Catholic authorities and in the spirit of the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council.

"Our Committee also notes that the observance of the 450th anniversary of the Reformation occurs while Catholics are honoring Christ the King, and while they are celebrating a Year of Faith in commemoration of the nineteenth centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul in witness to the Christian faith.

"It is our sincere prayer that the observance of these occasions will hasten the fulfillment of our Lord's own prayer 'that all may be one.'"

Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, New York, president of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America and general chairman of the Lutheran 450th Reformation Anniversary committee, states, "We have received with genuine joy and thanksgiving the acceptance of our invitation by the Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. We look forward with keenest anticipation to the opportunity afforded by this joint effort to become better acquainted one with the other, and also for the privilege it will grant us to bear witness to our common faith in Christ our Savior."

In a joint statement Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, chairman of the 450th Reformation Anniversary General Committee, and the Most Rev. John J. Carberry, chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs pointed out, "These discussions are to be based on the Scriptures as the basic authority and on

the historic doctrinal confessions of the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches. As befitting followers of Jesus Christ participants in these discussions are to meet their tasks with attitudes of Christian love and patience, intellectual honesty, confessional loyalty, doctrinal integrity, and openness to the power and guidance of the Spirit of God as He bestows these gifts through His Word.

"We recognize also that during the 16th century Reformation era educated laymen, such as princes and counselors, joined the clergy in the discussion of the issues of their day. In line with this historic precedent we encourage our Roman Catholic and Lutheran clergy and laity under the direction of local authorities to plan and conduct similar dialogues in their local communities. For this purpose guidelines have been prepared to enable our people to give witness to the degree of unity that already exists and to explore in a responsible manner and in Christian love and integrity those topics of particular significance for them.

"Our purpose is that through these discussions we may better understand one another, more clearly and realistically define the Roman Catholic -- Lutheran theological situation that actually exists today, more honestly recognize the degree of unity that is truly present among us, and more earnestly seek to remove under the power and guidance of the Spirit those barriers that remain to separate God's people from one another in His Church on earth."

Members of the joint Roman Catholic--Lutheran Reformation anniversary committee include: Dr. E. Theodore Bachmann, New York, chairman; the Very Rev. William W. Baum, Washington, D.C., secretary, Fr. Thomas E. Ambrogi, S.J., Woodstock, Md.; the Very Rev. Joseph W. Baker, St. Louis; Dr. Paul C. Empie, New York; Fr. Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P., New York; the Rev. Dale E. Griffin, St. Louis; Fr. John F. Hotchkin, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Richard P. Jungkuntz, St. Louis; Dr. Kent S. Knutson, St. Paul; Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, New York; and Fr. Harry J. McSorley, C.S.P., Washington, D. C.
