



# NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## U.S. ARMENIAN ORTHODOX, CATHOLIC DIALOGUE PLANNED

WASHINGTON--An ecumenical dialogue between theological teams representing the Armenian Orthodox Church in the United States and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops will be inaugurated next February in the Armenian Orthodox diocese's New York headquarters.

The February agenda was discussed at a (June 17) Washington meeting conducted by Armenian Orthodox Bishop Zaven Chinchinian of New York and Auxiliary Bishop J. Francis Stafford of Baltimore. Bishops Stafford and Chinchinian are co-chairmen of the dialogue and will lead teams of four theologians each in the consultation.

Initial topic chosen for the dialogue is "An Analysis of Histories of the Armenian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches up to the Seventh Century." It will deal with "historical, theological and pastoral questions," according to Father J. Peter Sheehan, Associate Director of the NCCB Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Preliminary discussions leading to the Armenian Orthodox-Catholic dialogue took place last August in Philadelphia when ranking prelates of both churches urged a joint consultation of theologians of both churches.

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The new consultation is the result of 1970 meetings between Armenian Patriarch Catholicos Vasken I and Pope Paul VI in which they asked scholars of both communities to study the background of differences between the two churches.

In addition to Bishops Chinchinian and Stafford and Father Sheehan, other participants in the Washington meeting were Bishop Papken Varjabedian and Father Zaven Arzoumanian, of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the U.S., and Professor Thomas E. Bird, of the Department of Slavic Languages, Queens College, L.I., N.Y.

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian is Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Orthodox Church of North America, which is included among Churches related to Oriental Orthodoxy. The diocese is headquartered in New York and counts approximately 500,000 communicants in the United States and Canada.

Father Sheehan noted that, with inauguration of the new consultation, the U.S. Catholic Church, represented by the NCCB Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs office, is engaged in ecumenical dialogue with eight American Christian communities. They are the Orthodox, Lutheran, Episcopalian, United Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed, Southern Baptist, Disciples of Christ, and Armenian Orthodox.

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