



NEWS

FILE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROGRESS IN RELATIONS CITED BY BISHOPS, LUTHERAN HEADS

WASHINGTON--Roman Catholic Bishops and Lutheran Presidents completed two days of meetings here with a call for increased discussions between Lutherans and Catholics through official dialogue commissions but also at the local level of church life. They expressed satisfaction at the number of meetings being held or planned by Catholics and Lutherans this year in joint observance of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession and passed a resolution praising the dialogues carried out in this country for the past 15 years under the sponsorship of the two churches.

The sixth annual meeting of Lutheran Presidents and Catholic Bishops was held at the offices of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA) March 17-18. A statement released by participants following the meeting said "attention was devoted to a number of pastoral concerns which have grown out of the theological dialogues as well as the increasing interrelatedness of our two traditions at other levels."

Among the issues discussed were the questions of the balance between Word and sacrament in the complete eucharistic service,

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2/Progress

variety and diversification in worship practice, the manner of disposition of the elements, pastoral care in cases of mixed marriage, infant communion, women's ordination, and the family.

The bishops and presidents recalled that at their meeting a year ago they had offered advice and encouragement to local groups of Lutherans and Catholics planning observances in 1980 of the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, the major working document of the Lutheran Church. "Though it is still early in the year, we are gratified to see how many such groups have been formed across our country," they said. "Personal experience of them as well as reports coming to us from others impress us with the widespread and serious interest that Lutherans and Roman Catholics have in the reconciliation taking place between our communities. The support of our people is itself a most important contributing element in this growth toward greater unity in the Lord and in His Church. We trust that renewed appreciation of the ecumenical intent of the Augsburg Confession will be a significant basis for the greater unity we hope to share."

Participants at the meeting also received reports on the on-going dialogues being carried out by the American and the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic commissions. In a unanimous resolution, the presidents and bishops said the discussions which began in this country in 1965 and are co-sponsored by Lutheran World Ministries and the BCEIA have been

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3/Progress

"extraordinarily fruitful." The resolution urged that the discussions continue even after completion of the present justification and Marian work in order to consider the work of the international dialogue and to do such further work as may be assigned.

"As this promising work continues both in dialogue commissions and at the local level of church life, we perceive the increasing need for continued discussion between us as Lutherans and Roman Catholics in order to discern the further practical steps we may be able to take together," the statement said. "As we do this we shall seek to keep in mind both the needs and opportunities we have here at home and the needs of our two communions around the world."

The Lutheran participants in the meeting were The Rev. James R. Crumley, Lutheran Church in America, New York, N.Y., The Rev. David W. Preus, the American Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, The Rev. Paul M. Orso, Maryland Synod/Lutheran Church in America, and the Rev. E. Harold Jansen, Eastern District/the American Lutheran Church. All four are Lutheran Presidents. Also present were three consultants, Dr. George Lindbeck, Yale Divinity School, Dr. Joseph Burgess, Lutheran Church/USA, Division of Theological Studies, New York, and Dr. William Rusch, Lutheran Church in America, New York, and a staff member, Dr. Paul A. Wee.

Catholic participants were Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler of Charleston, Chairman of the BCEIA, Coadjutor Bishop Ralph M. Fliss of Superior, Auxiliary Bishop William H. Keeler of Harrisburg, Auxiliary Bishop T. Austin Murphy of Baltimore,

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4/Progress

Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford, and Auxiliary Bishop John N. Wurm of St. Louis. Also participating were two consultants, Fathers Carl J. Peter and Avery Dulles, both from the Catholic University of America, and two staff members from the BCEIA, Fathers John F. Hotchkin and Joseph W. Witmer.

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