



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATHOLIC AND PRESBYTERIAN/REFORMED DIALOGUE NEARS COMPLETION

WASHINGTON--The current series of official Roman Catholic-Presbyterian/Reformed consultations is nearing completion with a joint statement expected in 1995.

"That would be especially appropriate since it would mark the 30th anniversary of our first Presbyterian/Reformed dialogue," said Dr. Eugene Fisher of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB).

Dr. Fisher's comments were made following a "very successful" meeting of the dialogue, held at Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia, May 8.

Dr. Fisher noted that the Roman Catholic-Presbyterian/Reformed consultation began in 1965, even before the close of the Second Vatican Council. The dialogue took as its starting point common reflection on a reading from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians:

"If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, and a common care for unity" (Philippians 2:1).

The consultation is chaired by Bishop John S. Cummins of Oakland for the BCEIA and Rev. Dr. Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez of Columbia Theological Seminary for the North American Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Presbyterian and Reformed

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(WARC). This is its fifth "round" in the past three decades. Each has led to joint statements and publications.

Just as the first major joint statement was on the topic of "Ministry in the Church" noted Dr. Fisher, "so we have in a sense come full circle." The present discussion has centered on "The Role of the Lay Christian in a Changing World and Church."

As earlier rounds were innovative in attempting for the first time to envision in a practical manner the structure and nature of a re-united Christian community (The Unity We Seek, 1977) and pioneered the ecumenical consideration of social-ethical issues (Ethics and the Search for Christian Unity, 1980), and Partners in Peace and Education, 1988), "so the current offering promises to be path finding in both substance and format," Dr. Fisher said. "It is hoped," he continued, "that the instrument will be immediately usable on the parish and congregational levels as a practical tool for interchurch dialogue groups, as well as challenging ecumenical thinkers of all denominations."

Present at the meeting on the Catholic side were Bishop Cummins; Brother Jeffrey Gros, FSC, BCEIA Associate Director; Dolores Leckey of the NCCB Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth; Rev. Kenan Osborne, OFM, of Franciscan Theological College, Berkeley, California; and Dr. Fisher.

Presbyterian/Reformed members present included Rev. Margrethe Brown, who staffs the consultation for WARC; Mr. Harold Saunders of the Presbyterian Church (USA); Dr. Alice Ling of Bangor Theological Seminary; Dr. David Beeson, United Church of Christ; and Rev. Paul Janssen, Reformed Church in America.

The next meeting of the consultation will take place in Washington, D.C., November 11-12, 1994.

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