

## CONVERSATIONS WITH RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

*We present here the text of the joint communiqué which was issued at the end of the latest in a series of conversations between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. The text gives full details —place, date, participants, etc. It remains only to add that, after the conversations, during the visit to the Leningrad Theological Academy and Seminary, Cardinal Willebrands was awarded an honorary doctorate in theology.*

### **Joint Communiqué**

The third theological discussion between representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church took place in the Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery in Zagorsk, USSR, from June 4th to 7th. Principal theme of the discussions was "The Church in a world in transformation". These conversations were a continuation of similar

theological meetings held in Leningrad in December 1967, and in Bari in December 1970.

Participating in the conversations from the Roman Catholic side were: His Grace, the Most Reverend Angelo Innocent Fernandes, Archbishop of Delhi and member of the Pontifical Commission "Justice and Peace", head of the delegation; the Reverend Mons. Charles Moeller, Secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; the Reverend Fr. Louis Bouyer, Professor of Patristics and Consultor of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; the Reverend Fr. Roberto Tucci, S.J., editor of *Civiltà Cattolica*; the Reverend Fr. John Long, S.J., of the Department for Eastern Churches of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

His Eminence John Cardinal Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, took part in the final session of the conversations.

Participants in the conversations from the

Russian Orthodox Church were: His Eminence Metropolitan Juvenaly of Tula and Beley, Chairman of the Department for External Church Affairs, head of the delegation; Archpriest Nikolay Gundayev, vice-chairman of the Department of External Church Affairs; Archimandrite Kirill, representative of the Russian Orthodox Church at the World Council of Churches in Geneva; Archpriest Vladimir Sorokin, assistant Professor and vice-Rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy; A. S. Buevsky, Secretary of the Department of External Church Affairs; D. P. Agitsky, Professor of Contemporary Theology at the Moscow Theological Academy.

His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod, President of the Commission of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church for Questions of Christian Unity and Relations between Churches, took part in some of the sessions of the conversations, including the opening and closing ones.

At the opening of the conversations His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim conveyed to all present the greetings of His Holiness Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and all the Russias. In his address, Metropolitan Nikodim observed that in the course of everyday life the Christian is constantly faced with the question of what his conduct should be as he follows Christ with constancy, that is, how he is to believe, to pray and to act so as to bring things together with Christ and in Christ, and not scatter them (*Matt.*, 12, 30). In answering this question the Metropolitan affirmed: "Since they are Christ-centered in their very foundation and in their heart, Christian reflection and action demand self-perfection of the Christian person. This is to be found, however, not in isolation from the surrounding world and from one's neighbours, but with a necessary involvement with them for service in the Spirit of Christ".

His Grace Archbishop Fernandes opened the discussions from the Roman Catholic side. He gave a short review of the previous conversations, showing how the discussions had passed from the stage of exchange of information to a real searching together into the meaning of the Christian message for today's world. He then traced a picture of the transformation taking place in the world in the areas of family life, social life, thought patterns, cultural forms, in the situation of millions of people who are passing from a state of resignation to one of militant concern for being recognized as true human beings with full human rights. Some questions presented themselves: how does the Church understand these changes and the movements they are generating? what can she contribute to them? what can she receive from them? Even if all the answers to these questions cannot be found during a single series of conversations, the questions themselves should be prominently in the thoughts of those taking part in them.

The introductory report from the Orthodox side was given by His Eminence Metropolitan Juvenaly. After analyzing the results of the two preceding

theological conversations, the Metropolitan observed that the Divine and the secular penetrate each other and one cannot think of the Church apart from the world. The Church lives in the world and is organically connected with it through the double calling of men, its own children, who at one and the same time compose the body of the Church and human society. The Gospel command to love God and one's neighbour provides the doctrinal basis for such an interconnection.

In the course of the conversations the participants considered the main theme under three aspects: 1) the Church and salvation in a changing world; 2) pastoral preoccupations today; and 3) the People of God and contemporary crises.

Reports on the first sub-theme were presented by Mons. Moeller and Professor D.P. Ogitsky.

Mons Moeller, addressing himself to the question of salvation in a world in transformation, examined three particular points and asked how Christian revelation responded to them. These were: a) secularization—the discovery of man's responsibility in and for the world, with the development and understanding of a theology of man, made to the image of God; b) the questioning of the purely rationalistic and technical in life with the discovery of Jesus as giving true life; c) a return to the source, or a theology of environment, with a respect for creation, and the sanctification of men and things, especially through the sacramental life of the Church, in the Holy Spirit.

Indicating that the process of change in the world began with the first day of creation, Professor Ogitsky expressed his conviction that the world is called by the Creator to a constant moral renewal. There can be no salvation of the faithful without effective love. Therefore service to the neighbour and to all mankind is a moral obligation for Christians who should fulfil it through self-restraint and self-denial. They should always be attentive to questions of the good ordering of temporal affairs and of human relations. Christians welcome the process of the democratization of life in national communities, the socialization of the relations of production, the success of peaceful coexistence, the strengthening of cooperation among peoples of varying convictions for the good of the world.

Fr. Roberto Tucci and Archpriest Vladimir Sorokin spoke on the second sub-theme.

Working from various studies made in the Roman Catholic Church, Father Tucci presented a panorama of the preoccupations of pastors and other leaders in that Church today. He considered both the preoccupations regarding the relationship between the community of the Church and the wider human family. Among the subjects presented for intensive discussion were: changes in the organizational structures of the Church, of her liturgy, theology and spiritual life; various forms of Christian living not connected with existing institutions; problems arising out of demands for social justice, from racial discrimination, from development, from peace, etc. Father Tucci also led a

discussion on some aspects of the theme of the forthcoming Synod of Bishops in 1974, evangelization of the contemporary world, and of the theme of the Holy Year of 1975, reconciliation.

After analyzing the area of applied pastoral care in modern secularized society, Father Vladimir Sorokin stressed the importance of cooperation between Christians and those of other faiths or of no religious convictions, in order to be successful in strengthening social justice and international peace. Self-perfection of each person is unthinkable without service to a neighbour who, for the Christian, is every man.

Reports on the third sub-theme were presented by Professor Louis Bouyer and Mr. A. S. Buevsky.

Father Bouyer devoted particular attention to the understanding of the concept, " People of God ". Within the framework of this understanding, he examined the ideas of the entire people of God as bearers of the Christian tradition, and the participation of all in the mission of the Church. He also considered the important point of the role of the Church as an institution as well as the relationship between the institution and individuals formed by the teaching of the Church who must meet concretely the various problems of today's world.

A. S. Buevsky stressed that the members of the Church, who have received sonship in Christ through grace, are that People of God who in many parts of the world are brought face to face with modern spiritual degradation: decline of morality, a cult of violence, personal gain, egoism. This People should work actively for the conservation of genuine moral values in their societies. With regard to modern political and international crises, the speaker stressed the need for an active participation by the People of God in settling them. He observed the positive significance of participation by religious groups in the World Congress of Forces of Peace to be held in Moscow in October of this year.

In the course of the fraternal discussions which followed each presentation, many questions related to the given theme were considered. The participants recognized that among them there still existed some diversity of views concerning practical applications of Christian principles to the concrete circumstances of life in the world. The Church is constantly confronted with the biblical question: how much is a person in the world, and still not of the world. It is difficult to give an answer which is universally valid. Still, there is a wide area of agreement on the general Christian principles which underlie the approach taken by both Churches to the problems they face in the fast-changing world.

In the course of the discussions, the participants agreed on certain general observations. These included:

1. A deeper understanding of the role of the Liturgy in the life of the Church. The Liturgy is not only the public worship of God and praise of Him; it also plays an important teaching and educational role. The members of the Church are

brought closer to the great events of God's revelation; they perceive better the truths of the Christian faith and are given a spiritual force and an intellectual preparation for witnessing to this faith of theirs.

2. The possibility and necessity of the cooperation of Christians with non-Christians and with those who do not share a religious view of life. There are vast areas of activity where effective cooperation can take place so as to make life more just, more human, more responsive to the legitimate desires of men. Concrete examples of this cooperation are joint work for peace among men and nations, for the elimination of racial discrimination, for the economic development of communities and nations.

3. The acceptance of the legitimate efforts by man, who is created in the image of God, to dominate and transform the world. Nevertheless, the Christian does not reduce man and the universe only to this visible world.

4. A recognition of the fact that there is a strong tendency towards some forms of " socialism " in many parts of the world. The participants in the discussions had varying understanding of the nature of these tendencies and of the degree of their value—this was not the object of the discussion—but they agreed that there are positive aspects in these tendencies which Christians should recognize and try to understand.

Certain questions were given general consideration, but it was recognized that they need further study by groups of our Churches. One of the most pressing questions is that of the significance of the Incarnation of Christ for the world and for the Christian living in the world. This lies at the basis of the whole question of the unique Christian contribution to today's world. It was felt that, in the light of a fundamental study of this theme, much more extended consideration must be given to the questions raised by development and liberation and by their relationship to salvation and the task of the Church. These subjects are particularly important for many emerging areas of the world. Serious consideration should also be given to life in a pluralistic society, where there is not only question of a legitimate variety among Christians themselves, but also of the significant possibility for relations between the believer and the non-believer.

The fraternal spirit in which the conversations were held was strengthened by common prayer. On the opening day of the conversations, the Roman Catholic representatives, led by Archbishop Angelo Fernandes, assisted at a special service of prayer at the shrine of St. Sergius in the monastery Church of the Holy Trinity. They prayed during the Vigil Service on the eve of the final day's celebration in the monastery Church of the Dormition of Our Lady and on the eve of the feast of the Ascension in the parish Church of the Prophet Elias in Zagorsk. They assisted at the Holy Liturgy celebrated by His Eminence Metropolitan Juvenaly on Ascension

Day in the Church of the Moscow Theological Schools dedicated to the Protection of Our Lady. On this occasion Cardinal John Willebrands and Metropolitan Nikodim were also present. Each morning the Orthodox participants attended the Mass concelebrated by Archbishop Angelo Fernandes and the Catholic delegates.

In the course of the meetings, Archimandrite Jerome, Father Superior of the Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery offered a fraternal meal in honour of the participants. In addition the delegates attended an examination-concert conducted by a graduate student from the course for choir directors of the Moscow Theological Academy. His Excellency Bishop Vladimir of Dmitrov also gave a reception in honour of the guests.

On Sunday, June 3, the second anniversary of the enthronization of His Holiness Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russias, the Roman Catholic delegation assisted at the Vigil Service and at the Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Holiness in the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Epiphany in Moscow. Later they were guests at the reception offered by the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On Monday, June 11, His Holiness Patriarch Pimen received Cardinal John Willebrands and the Roman Catholic delegation in audience and gave a reception in their honour.

At the end of the conversation the Roman

Catholic participants travelled to Odessa where they were warmly received by His Eminence Metropolitan Sergius of Kherson and Odessa. During their stay in this city they visited the Theological Seminary and the Monastery of the Dormition. Following upon this, the delegates were guests of His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodim in Leningrad. They visited the Leningrad Theological Academy and Seminary, where they were received by the Rector, His Excellency Bishop Meliton of Tikhvin.

While in Moscow, Odessa and Leningrad, the delegation of the Roman Catholic Church visited Orthodox and Catholic churches and had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with local historical monuments.

All the participants in the conversations are deeply aware of the significance of meetings such as theirs for relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church and are convinced of the usefulness of continuing them.

On behalf of the delegation of the Roman Catholic Church

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*Archbishop of Delhi*

On behalf of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church

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*Metropolitan of Tula and Belev*