

The Third Session

This week, for the third time since Pope John was inspired to summon them into council, the bishops of the Church gathered under the vault of St. Peter's Basilica. Observers both within and without the Church agree that the fathers will meet their most formidable test when they tackle the schema on ecumenism.

This policy-making document on interfaith relations, the third on the agenda for this session, will not only help to shape the outlook of Catholics toward persons of other faiths, but will also affect the attitudes of non-Catholics toward Catholics.

Interest centers chiefly on the two declarations with which the schema concludes: the one concerning religious liberty, the other concerning the Jews. Postponement of a vote on these questions at the second session was seized upon by the prophets of gloom as certain sign that the spirit of Pope John had passed . . . that the window would soon be shut again. We believe this third session will prove them wrong.

As for the schema's declaration on religious liberty, those who drafted it as well as some of those who criticized it most severely, agree that it has benefited from its interim-period facelifting. The original draft affirmed the principle of religious liberty, but then asserted that its expression could be, and at times must be, regulated by the common good. This appeared to put religious liberty and the common good into some sort of conflict or intrinsic opposition. The revised schema situates religious freedom within the common good of which it is an integral part, while pointing out that every right has limits.

Approval of a forthright statement on religious liberty will do more to foster understanding and charity among Christians than any other decree of the Council. It will also permit Catholics, both here in the United States and in other countries, to offer themselves for public service without having to endure the questions, suspicions, and mistrust with which John F. Kennedy was beset just four years ago.

A new draft of the statement on relations with the Jews was also composed during the interim between the second and third sessions. According to the version published recently in the New York Herald Tribune, the statement no longer contains the flat denial that Jews can justly be accused of deicide, that is, of God-killing. Instead it warns all to be on their guard "not to impute to the Jews of our time that which was perpetrated in the Passion of Christ." Here is a case which proves the value of a certain amount of secrecy. Had the original, seemingly stronger draft never been made public, most men would have been satisfied with the newer rendition.

Jewish leaders have also expressed dismay at the schema's emphasis on the eventual approach of the Jews to the Church. This indeed, does seem out of place, since conversion to another religion cannot be the object of ecumenism.

Still, the prophets of gloom have little on which to base their lamentations. No one outside the Trinity knows what changes the fathers will introduce into these declarations. We remain confident that this third session will be no less beneficial to the Church and to the world than the two which preceded it.

AND THEY SHALL TURN
THEIR SWORDS INTO
PLOUGHSHARES, AND
THEIR SPEARS INTO SICKLES
ISAIAH 2:4.



WASHINGTON LETTER

Rank - and - File Communists

By J. J. Gilbert

WASHINGTON — Americans are too complacent about the everyday works of communist activists in their midst, and Reds who spread "Hate the U. S." propaganda in foreign lands, a Congressional unit says.

"Many Americans tend to scoff at, dismiss lightly, and underrate the importance — and the danger — of routine, day-to-day, communist agitation and propaganda activities," it is asserted.

Because human nature is what it is, a report declares, "stories of espionage and high-level intrigue — published after the fact

and after the damage has been done — get the blazing headlines and extensive, detailed news treatment."

But, it continues, it is the rank-and-file communists, peddling party literature from door to door, distributing handbills on street corners, speaking at front meetings, holding minor union offices, teaching in schools, or agitating in a remote village in a distant land — rather than the espionage agents—"who, to date, have played a major role in paving the way for communist revolutions and the destruction of freedom in a number of nations."

"Moscow has accomplished more through them (the rank-and-file communists) than some would-be world conquerors of the past could accomplish through the use of all their military power," says the U. S. House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities.

The committee, in its annual report, says the communists' maintenance of a constant "Hate America" barrage "results in

more than 'Yankee Go Home' signs in foreign lands."

"It pays off for the communists," the committee continues, "in the bombing of United States Information Service libraries abroad, the storming of U. S. embassies, open insults hurled at our diplomatic representatives and high State Department officials in their travels abroad, and in many other ways. At home, it results in certain of our own citizens defying our laws, stealing our secrets, and engaging in other traitorous activities."

The committee also says: "Because of 'Hate the U. S.' propaganda and agitation campaigns, attempts have been made on the lives of two recent Presidents of the United States." It cites the attempt to shoot President Truman in 1950, and the assassination of President Kennedy.

"These frightening examples of the extremes to which 'Hate America' agitation-propaganda campaigns can drive adherents of radical movements should long

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WHY CONFRA-TERNITY?

by Father G. Lewis

The growth of a Christian is a continuous process — as long as a man breathes, he is called to be a Witness of Christ. But how can one witness who does not know?

The motto of St. Pius X, "To restore all things in Christ" could well be the motto of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. It is certainly the answer to the oft-heard question, "Why the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine?"

The work of the Confraternity is simply to bring all men to the knowledge of Christ; to inspire all to realize their vocation as Witnesses of Christ. We still tend to think of the Confraternity in terms of the Parish School of Religion for public school children — but it is the goal of the Confraternity to reach all — the infant, the child, the adolescent, the adult. This instruction is accomplished primarily through three phases of the Confraternity program — the Parent-Educator, the School of Religion, and the Discussion Club divisions. Here we learn of Christ so that we might proclaim Christ to the world in our lives.

This is not, however, the end of the Confraternity. There is another most important fruit of the Confraternity that must be considered — the good that comes to the Confraternity worker.

There is a place in the Confraternity for every individual — a place to exercise apostolic labor. No one learns better his Christian faith than the faithful, active CCD worker. Here he grows in the knowledge of Christ as he strives to impart it to others; here he realizes his ability to be an active Witness of Christ; here he becomes what the Church has been asking of the laity for a long time — a true apostle of Christ. There is no greater outlet for Catholic Action than the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

Nor is the Confraternity limited to the Faithful. Rather, its program goes out to those who once had the gift of Faith and now cherish it no longer, and to those who have never known Christ in His Church. The Apostles of Good Will of the CCD have as their work the bringing of the message of Christ to those who are lax and lapsed as well as those who are not members of the Church. This important phase of the Confraternity has been one of the least stressed — yet, this work is the immediate vocation of every baptized Christian.

On this Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Sunday the Church once again calls us to a realization of our vocation as Christians — that all people and all things will be restored in Christ.

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