



LAY LEADERS of the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women held a joint meeting at the Villa Cortona, Bethesda, Md., (Jan. 22) while the boards of directors of the two organizations were in session. Bishop John J. Russell of Richmond presided in

his capacity as assistant episcopal chairman of the Department of Lay Organizations of U.S.C.C. At left of Bishop Russell is Martin H. Work, executive director, N.C.C.M., and at right Miss Margaret Mealey, executive director, N.C.C.W. (NC Photos)

### Bishop Tells Ecumenical Service:

## Weigh Validity of Disunity

ST. PAUL, Minn. — (RNS) — A Catholic bishop said here that it is time for Christians of various traditions to see if they have sufficient reason to remain divided any longer.

"We should all examine our backgrounds to see if we can continue to justify our separate existence," said Auxiliary Bishop Jerome J. Hastrich of Madison, Wis.

He spoke at an ecumenical worship service at the Minnesota State Pastors' Conference at Hamline Methodist Church. The service marked the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The pastors' conference, sponsored by the Minnesota, Minneapolis and St. Paul Councils of Churches, for the first time attracted a sizeable group of Catholic priests. About 35 were among the 300 registrants.

IN HIS SERMON, Bishop Hastrich said the Protestant reformers had not intended that their separation from the Catholic Church would be a permanent arrangement.

They had expected to return when the Church had purified itself, the bishop said, noting that one of the main objectives of the Second Vatican Council was to make the Catholic Church more like the Church of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Hastrich said the things which divide Catholics and Protestants are mostly "man-made" and not as meaningful as those that unite them.

He expressed hope that a common Bible for Christians "would lead our minds to the same conclusions" through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. William G. Law, pastor of Hamline Methodist church, led the interreligious congregation in a "confession of disunity" and in prayers for unity.

AT THE CONFERENCE dinner which preceded the service, Dr. Roger Hazelton, a United Church of Christ theologian, said the search for wholeness is the present orientation of the ecumenical movement.

"No one Church can truly be the Church without the others," he declared. "The denominational form of the Church is at best a halfway house on the way to the Church's wholeness — a house to be lived in for a time and then to be moved on from."

Dr. Hazelton is a professor at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, Newton Centre, Mass.

In an earlier lecture, Dr. Sherwood Wirt of Minneapolis, editor of the Billy Graham magazine, *Decision*, discussed the "death of God" theologians from an evangelical point of view.

Dr. Wirt said he agreed that "a lot of churches are dead," but that this does not affect God.

THERE IS LITTLE difference between the Christian atheist and the hard-core atheist, Dr. Wirt observed. One says that "God no longer exists" and the other says that "God never did exist."

The "death of God" theologians, by their own choice, have put themselves outside the household of Christian faith, Dr. Wirt continued. He said these

men had "built up the biggest case of celestial sour grapes in the history of mankind."

The "real tragedy" of the "death of God" theologians, he said, is that they are unaware of God's moving power in the world today.

Telling how some people have had their lives changed through Billy Graham's preaching, Dr. Wirt asserted: "We believe God is alive because we see Him answering prayer all the time."

He added that he does not believe the "God is dead" movement has yet "crested."

"We are moving into a secular age," he said, predicting that by the end of this century "a lot of churches, including some in the Twin Cities, will be little more than social and political improvement clubs."

Dr. Carl H. Lundquist, president of Bethel College and Bethel Seminary, led devotions at the sessions as conference chaplain.

# Unity Rites Ruling Reported Changed

VATICAN CITY — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI has nullified a prohibition against Catholics participating in Christian unity services in Protestant churches of Rome, according to Vatican sources.

The reversal was contained in a letter to officials of the Rome diocese from the Vatican Secretariat of State which said that "higher authority" — apparently the Pope — has rescinded the earlier ban.

(While the Pope is Bishop of Rome, the day-to-day operations of the diocese are the responsibility of Luigi Cardinal Traglia as papal vicar.)

ROME'S CATHOLICS were to participate in ecumenical prayer — not liturgical — services in the city's main Anglican, Episcopal and Lutheran churches in connection with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

But an opinion from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly the Holy Office) said that it was "not opportune for the moment" that Catholics should take part in the unity services.

The ruling applied only to Rome and no reasons were given for the prohibition, deliberately expressed in terms that left the door open for a reversal. It came as a disappointment and as a surprise to organizers of the unity services and to many Catholic and non-Catholic leaders abroad who have promoted the ecumenical movement.

It was noted that during the unity octave, interreligious services were held in many parts of the world with permission of Catholic bishops including the Madrid diocese in Spain, regarded as conservative.

VATICAN SOURCES speculated

ed that the ban from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith came without knowledge of Pope Paul who at the time had cancelled appointments because of a mild case of influenza. The Pope is head of the congregation, whose Pro-Prefect is Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, known as one of the more conservative prelates in the Roman Curia.

No official announcement of the Pope's reversal of the prohibition was made by the Vatican, presumably to prevent any embarrassment to Cardinal Ottaviani.

The Pope's reversal of the earlier ruling was seen as having only symbolic value as it came too late for Catholic participation in the three planned unity services. However, it was an indication that Catholics in Rome would not be forbidden to attend ecumenical services on future occasions.

### Honors Award

Miss Alice Alspaugh of Rural Hall, N.C. was one of the 39 Sophomores named to the Dean's Honor List at the College of Mt. St. Joseph in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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