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## The Students' Assembly

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another priestly job; it is a wholly different priestly job, a unique one, making exceptionally full and peculiar demands on the personal and intellectual resources of the chaplain. During his preparation, therefore, the chaplain-to-be must achieve a complete orientation to his new situation. This means adjustment not merely to the "university" situation but also to the situation of each university where and as it is: a point recurrently noted was the failure of the Western mind to comprehend and, especially, make allowances for the differences inherent in Asian culture.

In informal talks among themselves the chaplains very commonly noted the very low level of religious knowledge among the local Catholic students participating in the students' "workshop" discussions. This is, lamentably often, "grade-school" knowledge: grasp of a litany of true propositions but no grasp of their full meaning or of the grounds on which assent to them is given. The women of our Catholic colleges (SCA representatives) seem woefully deficient in this regard. Another impression, gathered from both workshop and plenary sessions, was of a prevailing double standard of truth: truths of religion in one compartment, truths of life in another.

These defects were noted and commented upon and the fact of that observation and comment seems worthy of record. Whatever the complete cause may be, it is evident that some hard thinking about our methods of religious instruction (perhaps too much spoon-feeding?) needs to be done.

JAMES F. CULLIGAN

#### 4. The Students' Assembly

The spirit of the Interfederal Assembly was well expressed by Mr. Thom Kerstiens: "One of the most characteristic phenomena of our time is the will for more international understanding and collaboration. But if students in general have the task of working for this international understanding, how much more is it the duty of Catholic students to work in this direction, for

they have been brought up in a Faith which allows no room for racial, national or cultural discrimination." It was in this spirit that 160 students from 54 countries came to Manila to take part in the 1959 Assembly.

The International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), a subsidiary of Pax Romana, is one of the few international organizations to survive two world wars. Since its foundation by a group of European students in 1880 its growth has been phenomenal. Today it comprises 95 autonomous national student federations in 55 countries bound together by the strength of a common cause. The Interfederal Assembly is held annually to carry out on the international level Pax Romana's primary aim of encouraging in Catholic students a consciousness of their responsibilities.

The 1959 Interfederal Assembly was divided into two parts: the Formation Seminar, held from December 26-28; and the Administrative Sessions, January 2-7. An Asian Federations' Business meeting was held from December 29 to January 1.

With "The Social and Economic Problems of the Modern World and the Social Responsibility of the Catholic Student" as its theme, the Formation Seminar was aimed at helping the student delegates to arrive at a clear picture of concrete social situations and tensions, especially in the developing countries, and at determining the social responsibility of the Catholic student within the context of these conditions and in the light of the social teachings of the Church.

The general structure of the problems was sketched out by foreign and local experts. Rev. Peter Pillai, O.M.I. (Ceylon), treating of the social and economic problems of developing countries, cited the economic problems of low wages, unemployment, underemployment, unequal distribution of land, low farm production and the poverty of primary producers. He also touched upon the social problem of disparity between the social classes. The problem of communist infiltration in developing countries was outlined by Dean José Hernández (Philippines). In the field of science, Dr. Lucien Morren (Belgium) pointed out the ambiguity of much contemporary thought with regard to the

relationship between science and religion. Mr. Jean Larnaud (France) lectured on adult education and community development, the methods involved, and the ways by which these movements can be promoted.

The role of the Catholic student as a student and as a member of the national community was explained by Dr. Jesús M. Tan (Philippines). As a student, "his present life is a preparation for the assumption of leadership in the future." In the various areas of national life, Dr. Tan pointed out, the Catholic student's task covers many fields: in the educational field, the inclusion of religion in the curriculum; the promotion of a Christian social order in the socio-economic field; in the civic field, patriotism; and in the spiritual sphere, as a member of the mystical body, "to partake in the duties and responsibilities of the Church in carrying out Christ's mandate, 'Go and teach ye all nations.'"

Atty. Ramon T. Oben (Philippines) spoke of the social teachings of the Church. While he gave a comprehensive enumeration of the principles formulated in the social encyclicals, he failed to explain clearly the practical applications of these principles to particular conditions as many of the delegates expected he would. His frequent reference to these principles as being the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas and as such demanding rigid application drew questions from the audience.

Supplementing the general picture given by the speeches, the seminar workshops, through discussions between the delegates of different countries, gave the delegates some knowledge of the particular problems facing each country and what each national federation was doing about them. Of great interest was the account of the great work being done by the Indian Federation in organizing student work camps during the vacations, not only to relieve the grinding poverty of so many in India but also to develop social consciousness in the students. This led to a lively discussion of the extent of the social responsibility of the Catholic student, in which the Rev. T. Kuria-cose, S.J., (Ceylon) and Rev. P. Ceyrac, S.J., (India) took the lead.

The administrative sessions consisted of plenary sessions and workshops. They took up the leadership formation methods being used by each national federation and discussed the program of Pax Romana International for the next year.

Raul González Simón, Assistant Secretary for Latin America, speaking in a plenary session on leadership formation, explained the mission, qualities, and spirituality of the student leader. Against this background he presented a proposed program of leadership training within the framework of Pax Romana, consisting not only of formation in the basic teachings of the Church and in the aims and organization of Pax Romana but also of training in the technical methods of organization.

A "declaration of principles" was discussed covering the apostolic vocation, especially in the university; the aims of Pax Romana on the international, national, and local levels; the universality of Pax Romana; its interior life. The discussions also covered the implementation of these principles, "which must pervade the work of Pax Romana at every level of its activity." Other matters were taken up, such as reports, finances, publications, international relations, and elections.

The Asian Federations' Business Meeting was called to bring together the Asian delegates to deliberate and to arrive at proposals regarding coordination, Asian publications, and inter-Asian relations. Several workshops discussed the university community in the Asian countries and the role of Pax Romana federations in Asia. With this as background the delegates proceeded to deliberate on a program of action for Asia.

The sense of the meeting was that in most Asian countries Catholic students are faced with many difficulties in their university apostolate in view of the smallness of their numbers. The scattered Catholic students in Ceylon find it hard to participate as a whole in student government. In Hongkong, political tension in the university community keeps students from holding public discussions. Though the university community in South Korea is very anti-communistic, the few Catholic students have only a minority influence. In Thailand, the few Catholic families are mostly too poor to enroll their sons and

daughters in the university. In Singapore, the student socialist group exerts powerful influence. The widespread identification of Catholicism with Western culture and the strong communistic influence in many universities are the chief difficulties confronting Catholic students in Japan. In India Catholic students, though still a comparatively small group, are steadily growing in influence. In Australia and the Philippines there seem to be no serious problems. This fact, however, tends to encourage complacency among Catholic university students, particularly in the Philippines.

Though all the Asian delegates felt the need of a regional center for general exchange of information and coordination of activities in Asia, financial and staff problems are too great for the project to be feasible at present. Constant direct exchange of views by mail was agreed upon.

It was decided that *LUMEN DE ORIENTE*, the Asian publication of *Pax Romana*, be substituted for the Asian Supplement of the *PAX ROMANA JOURNAL*. It was suggested, however, that the Indonesian federation, which had been publishing *LUMEN DE ORIENTE*, continue to publish their own federation newsletter.

The organizers of the 1959 Interfederal Assembly did a commendable job. The program of the conference was well planned and carried out. Praise is due to the conference secretariat which, though understaffed, worked hard to meet the documentation problems of the conference. When abrupt changes in the schedule of conference activities had to be made, last-minute mimeographed bulletins explaining the change were given out. Research papers were, however, sometimes unreliable. Mention should be made of the fine work of Miss Mary González of the University of Santo Tomás, who headed the hospitality committee, and her colleagues, Carlos Arnaldo and Próspero Cebedo of the Ateneo de Manila. St. Paul's College presented a musical program and barrio fiesta which the delegates enjoyed immensely.

It is unfortunate that the Filipino delegates took so little part in the discussions. However, their duties as hosts probably made it difficult for them to do so.

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