



NEWS

FILE
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DATE: November 5, 1985

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O - 202/659-6700

H - 202/686-1824

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATHOLIC, LUTHERAN BISHOPS APPROVE JOINT PRAYER SERVICE

WASHINGTON--Lutheran and Catholic bishops at their annual meeting here gave final approval to a newly developed joint prayer service, discussed a report on models of unity prepared by an international Lutheran-Catholic commission, and reflected on a report prepared by Bishop James W. Malone, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, for the forthcoming world synod of bishops at the Vatican.

The 11th annual meeting of Lutheran and Catholic bishops took place here October 29-30. The bishops use the meetings to take stock of important developments in the relationship between the churches and to offer counsel for future directions.

At the session the Bishops gave final approval to a joint service entitled "Word, Petition and Praise." It was developed at the bishops' request by Lutheran and Roman Catholic liturgists for use by Lutherans and Catholics in local settings.

The service will be inaugurated by Lutheran and Catholic bishops when they conduct a joint service on the evening of November 14 at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Washington, D.C. Among bishops from both churches who will participate in the

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service are Bishop David Preus, presiding bishop of the American Lutheran Church, Roman Catholic Archbishop James A. Hickey of Washington, Bishop James R. Crumley, Jr., bishop of the Lutheran Church in America, Bishop Will Herzfeld, presiding bishop of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Bishop Malone will preach.

A major section of the meeting was spent in initial discussion of the report from the International Lutheran-Catholic joint commission, "Facing Unity: Models, Forms, and Phases for Lutheran-Roman Catholic Church Fellowship." The report, which proposes a series of steps that might lead to eventual full unity of the churches, was prepared by a commission co-sponsored by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation.

The bishops agreed that "Facing Unity" should be reviewed by appropriate committees for both sides during the coming year, followed by common study. George Lindbeck, professor at Yale Divinity School, and co-chairman of the commission during the development of the document, led the discussion.

Bishop Crumley reported on his recently publicized exchange of letters with Pope John Paul II. The strong word of encouragement contained in these letters for the building up of Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations has had a wide echo in the churches. In his letter, Pope John Paul expressed appreciation for the "impressive statements" such as the recent "Justification by Faith" statement

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of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. The Catholic bishops conveyed their gratitude to Bishop Crumley for the initiatives he has taken in collaboration with the Pope.

The justification statement is now available in book form and has received wide circulation. It is now being translated into several languages including German and Italian.

Members of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue reported that they are progressing in their investigation of the theme: "The Saints and Mary." They have moved from a general survey of the material to posing questions to one another.

Father William Lewers, director of the Office of International Justice and Peace, U.S. Catholic Conference, gave an update on the preparation of the Catholic Bishops pastoral letter on the economy. Lutherans and Catholics expressed their common commitment to the cause of social and economic justice.

The group also discussed the report prepared by Bishop James Malone, NCCB President, in preparation for the Synod of Bishops to be convened in Rome from Nov. 25 to Dec. 8. In his report, Bishop Malone spoke of the importance of bilateral dialogues and cited the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue as among the most fruitful.

The next meeting of the Lutheran and Catholic Bishops is set for Oct. 28-29, 1986 in Washington, D.C.

Those present at the meeting included: Roman Catholics-Bishops William H. Keeler of Harrisburg, Ralph M. Fliss of Superior, and Ernest Unterkoefer of Charleston, Archbishop

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John F. Whealon of Hartford, Father Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. of the Catholic University of America, Father Carl J. Peter of Catholic University, and Fathers John F. Hotchkin and Joseph W. Witmer of the secretariat of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs (BCEIA).

Lutherans-Dr. H. George Anderson, President, Luther College, Dr. George Burgess, Executive Director, Division of Lutheran Studies, Lutheran Council of the USA, Bishop James R. Crumley, Lutheran Church in America, Rev. Dr. Will Herzfeld, Bishop, Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, The Rev. E. Harold Jansen, Bishop, Eastern District/The American Lutheran Church, Dr. George Lindbeck, Yale Divinity School, Bishop Virgil A. Moyer, Jr., Lutheran Church in America-Virginia Synod, Bishop David W. Preus, The American Lutheran Church, Dr. William Rusch, Lutheran Church in America, Dr. Paul A. Wee, Lutheran World Ministries, and Dr. David Burke, Lutheran World Ministries.

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