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BAPTIST-CATHOLIC 'OPENNESS' EXEMPLIFIED IN NEW VOLUME

ATLANTA, Ga.--"In the last third of the 20th century Baptists and Catholics are actually meeting--in the open--with openness."

The comment is made by Dr. M. Thomas Starkes, Secretary of the Department of Interfaith Witness of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, in a new publication which itself exemplifies the trend toward Baptist-Catholic openness.

The publication, "Living the Faith in Today's World," contains the proceedings of the Baptist-Catholic Southwestern Regional Conference held last October 16-18 in Houston, Tex.

The conference was jointly sponsored by the Home Mission Board's Department of Interfaith Witness and the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Nearly 70 Catholic and Baptist representatives from a 10-state area attended.

The meeting was part of a continuing effort to bring together leaders of the Baptist and Roman Catholic Churches to

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foster local dialogue and cooperation. The first such conference was held at Daytona Beach, Fla., in January, 1971, and another will be held in February, 1974, at a place yet to be determined.

In his foreword to "Living the Faith in Today's World" Dr. Starkes emphasizes the growing openness in Baptist-Catholic relations after "almost five centuries of ignorant fear, simplistic stereotyping and prejudicial aloofness."

"The openness extends to the trust level, when guards are lowered, truths exchanged, and friends won," he writes. "The critics of such interchange wag their heads in disbelief and tongues in derision. One encounter of a leading bishop asking about evangelism and a skeptical Baptist seeing his own tradition clearer through a traditional Church is worth the efforts.

"Pioneers are not often recognized until they have gone, but they know the worth of what they chance. The risk at Houston was worth it, as Catholics and Baptists continued to marvel at the mercy of God working through each group urging his salvation through human vessels to human vessels. May there be more such risks."

Besides Dr. Starkes, contributors of papers to the proceedings include Bishop William W. Baum of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Mo., who this month was named Archbishop of Washington, Dr. James Flamming, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Abilene, Tex., and Bishop Joseph A. Durick of Nashville, Tenn.

In addition, the proceedings contain the reports of seminar groups which met during the conference to discuss such topics as

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"The Minister and Priest Today," "Christian Responsibility and American Minorities," and "Strategies for Outreach toward Non-Believers."

Copies of the 78-page proceedings are available for one dollar each from the Department of Interfaith Witness, Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (1350 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309) and from the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005).

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