

EXTRACTS

LAST September 175 priests having charge of the direction of French communities of nuns met in conference under the inspiration of Père Plé, O.P., of *La Vie Spirituelle*. At the conclusion of the Congress they outlined certain resolutions or *vœux*, which have subsequently been approved by the Cardinals and Archbishops of France:

(a) We consider that the time is ripe for us to recall to the minds of our confreres and superiors the various priestly functions in respect of nuns. The Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops has already, in March 1948, given this advice to the clergy on the subject of nuns: "The ministry in respect of religious sisters is to be regarded as a chosen ministry of a particularly delicate nature, which may not be carried out without preparation or consideration, at risk of grave prejudice to souls".

(b) We have been forced to admit that many priests are not prepared for this ministry. In order to remedy this defect we have submitted the following suggestions.

(i) That the seminarists and young religious men should at once be encouraged to evaluate justly the ministry in respect of religious sisters, that they be instructed in the theology and history of religious life and in the canon and pastoral law dealing with nuns.

(ii) That this formation should be continued for young priests (who as a rule are not yet entrusted with the care of nuns) at their retreats and clergy meetings.

(iii) For the clergy already entrusted with this ministry we suggest that a national congress should be called from time to time, say every three years; that study days—for diocese or province—should be regularly provided for them.

(c) The members of this congress beg to repeat the resolutions already expressed in March 1948 by the Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops who recommended in particular:

(i) In each diocese one or more priests should become specialists both for the spiritual needs of the religious communities of women and for the formation of the parish clergy who are confessors or "extra-ordinaries" for nuns and who are engaged in preaching to them.

(ii) A place of importance in clerical journals and books be given to elucidating and assisting this ministry to nuns.

(iii) A more active share be taken by the regular clergy who are better acquainted with the practice of religious life as they are often united with women congregations under the same spiritual patronage.

This congress has shown how happy and fruitful collaboration in this common work can be between the secular clergy and religious of all the spiritual families.

(d) The members of the congress suggested that a directory for the use of chaplains, confessors and canonical visitors should be drawn up and published under the supervision of the Hierarchy.

(e) It was also suggested that the canonical visitations should take place regularly as laid down by the Code and that they should be made by specially qualified priests, either secular or regular.

(f) It seemed very desirable that the initiative already taken by certain dioceses should become general, where they organise regular days of recollection for nuns, days which prove specially useful for the smaller congregations who suffer more than the larger from lack of formation.

(g) The members of the congress pointed out the serious inconveniences that sometimes arise from the fact that the nuns (especially in parochial schools) have for their ordinary confessor the priest with whom they have to collaborate outside the confessional. If any other arrangement be impossible, it seemed desirable that these sisters should be able to benefit with the greatest possible ease by approaching another priest for confession.

(h) It appeared timely for priests in charge of sisters, each according to his abilities, to be urged to give the nuns a formation, at once doctrinal, biblical, moral and liturgical, both fundamental and applied, so as to encourage in them a feeling for the Church and her actual needs—on the universal as well as diocesan and parochial levels and to nourish and guide their understanding of the evangelical life, the leaven of religious life.

(i) It was suggested that the priests, both secular and regular, should have a real desire to awaken religious vocations especially during their retreats and days of recollection given to girls, as well as in the confessional.

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