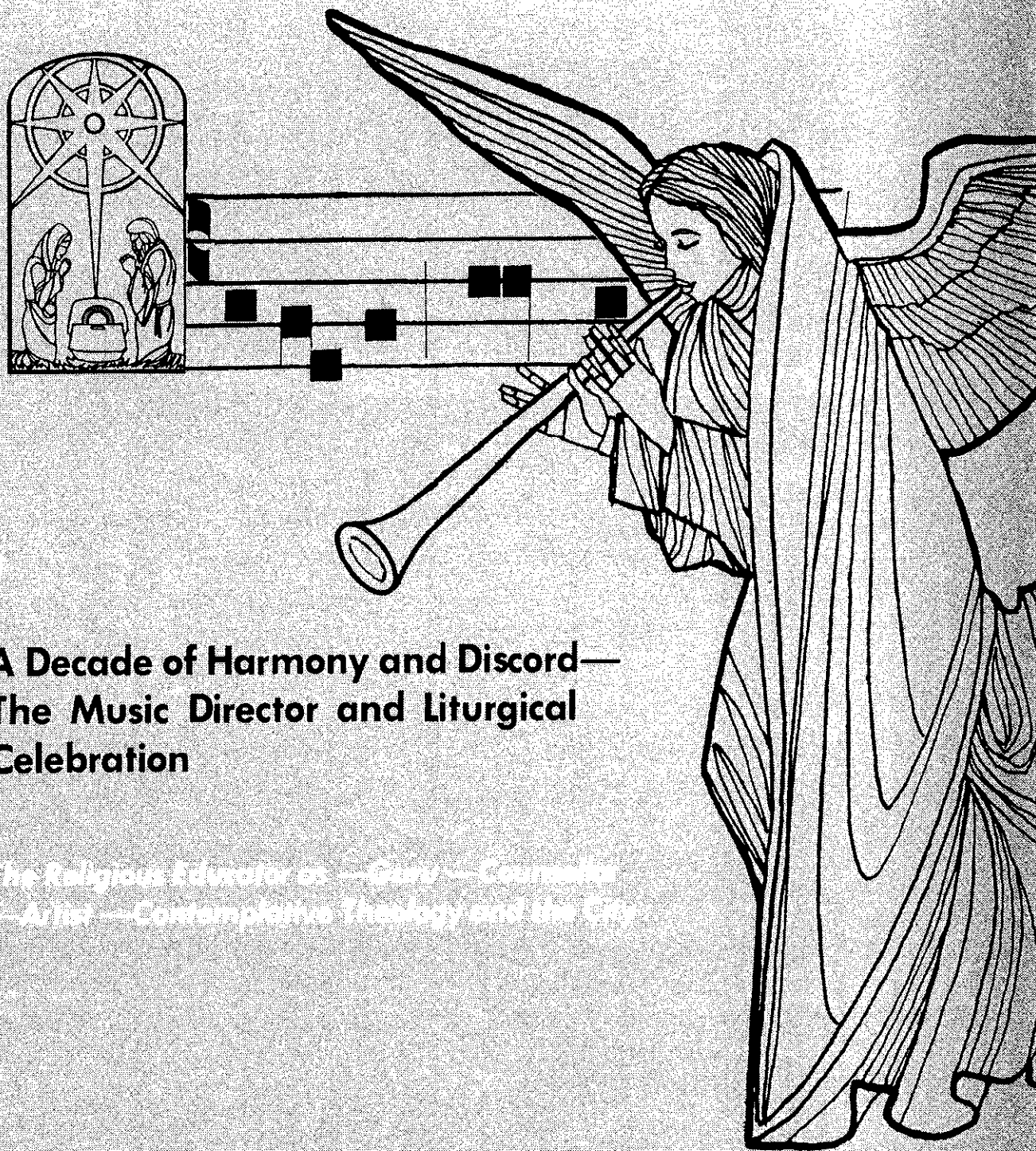


# THE LIVING LIGHT


Volume 1, Number 1



## A Decade of Harmony and Discord— The Music Director and Liturgical Celebration

*The Religious Educator as — Guru — Counselor  
— Artist — Contemplative Theologian and the City*

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# The NCDD at Ten

By Thomas E. Kramer and Robert Stamschorr

1977 marks the tenth anniversary of the National Conference of Diocesan Directors of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (NCDD-CCD). In every one of the Catholic dioceses in the United States there is a catechetical office with a director appointed by the bishop. The director is charged with policy making, planning, moderating and coordinating the catechetical activities of the diocese as a whole and assisting local parishes and programs to carry on their work. Although they had been holding annual meetings since 1937 under the sponsorship of the National Center of Religious Education — CCD, it was only in 1967 that they organized as an autonomous group. It is necessary to keep this fact in mind in order to understand how the NCDD, an organization that began a decade ago, can call its 1977 convention, the 41st annual meeting!

The tenth anniversary of the NCDD seems an appropriate occasion to review the history, purpose and accomplishments of the NCDD.

## *Beginnings*

Although the origin of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine goes back to Saint Charles Borromeo and the period immediately following the Council of Trent, the movement owes its modern resurgence to Pope Pius X and his motu proprio *Acerbo nimis* in 1903. The Code of Canon Law states that bishops should see to it that the CCD be established in every parish (can. 711, No. 2). Later the decree *Provido sane* issued by the Congregation of the Council during the time of Pius XI directed that diocesan and national offices be established to promote, support and coordinate the work of the Confraternity at the local level.

The first national meeting of CCD directors took place in conjunction with the 1934 convention of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota. Fifteen diocesan directors had responded to the invitation of Edwin V. O'Hara, then bishop of Great Falls, Montana, and chair-

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man of the NCRLC. Their purpose was to petition the U.S. hierarchy to establish a Bishops' Committee and a National Center to promote the CCD. The episcopal committee was formed at the November meeting of the bishops that same year, and in 1935 the committee set up a National Center. The Committee and Center worked to have the CCD formally established in every diocese with an active director in charge.<sup>1</sup>

The vision and enthusiasm of these 15 — and countless others from one end of the nation to the other — had resulted in a nationwide catechetical effort that served as a model for other nations throughout the world. By the time the directors gathered in New Orleans for their 1966 annual meeting, virtually every diocese boasted an office and program of religious education. A wealth of catechetical materials was readily available. The often stated goal of “every Catholic child in a Catholic School” had been laid to rest as the only option, freeing the CCD from its role as an inadequate temporary substitute for school systems. A “cradle-to-grave” approach to religious education had been adopted, and literally hundreds of thousands of volunteers and professionals were contributing to the massive effort of religious education in the United States.

All of this had been accomplished in the space of a few decades under the leadership of the Bishops' Committee for CCD, the National Center of Religious Education-CCD, and the diocesan directors. But as the directors gathered in New Orleans for their national meeting in April, 1966, they had little time or inclination to bask in the glow of past achievements.

## *New Challenges*

Just a few months earlier, the bishops had returned home from the Second Vatican Council. Change was in the air. The call to action heralded by the conciliar pronouncements embraced every member of the Church. Those who bore the responsibility for religious education recognized the magnitude of their role in providing leadership as the Church set out on its journey into the uncharted future.

The threefold partnership of the past — Bishops' Committee, National Center, diocesan directors — had proved to be highly effective. The directors realized that their own number, as well as the demands of a new era, required an organizational effort beyond that of the past to ensure that they be able to carry out effectively their role in the partnership in the years ahead.

<sup>1</sup>THE LIVING LIGHT, 12 (Winter 1975), p. 580.

The need for a more effective means of communication among themselves and with the other two members of the partnership was high on their list of priorities. It was suggested that the directors form some sort of national organization for this purpose. When a poll was taken, the response from 126 directors was unanimous in favoring the formation of such a group.

In September of 1966, the directors present in Pittsburgh for the Twelfth National CCD Congress voted to form a National Committee composed of one elected representative from each of the twelve ecclesiastical provinces. The Bishops' Committee for the CCD, also meeting in Pittsburgh in conjunction with the Congress, was informed of the action taken by the directors and approved it on September 16.

Following the Pittsburgh Congress, John Russell who had been elected temporary chairman sent a letter to all the bishops of the country. The letter states that "The National Committee of Diocesan Directors was born of the acknowledged need and great desire of the directors for the means whereby they could on a permanent basis, communicate and collaborate with one another, with the CCD Bishops' Committee, with the National Center of CCD and any other group involved with religious education."

Included with the letter were a number of documents on the rationale and purposes of the committee. Among these is a "Summary Statement on the National Committee of Diocesan Directors of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine." This summary states that the Committee will be of assistance to the Bishops' Committee and the National Center "by supplying them with a network for communication and collaboration whereby their programs and contributions can be more effectively transmitted to the diocesan level," and "by indicating to them the catechetical posture and needs of the nation." It also indicates the benefits to the diocesan directors and to catechetical activity generally that the Committee would accomplish.

The Committee held its first meeting in Washington, D.C., in January, 1967. They elected officers for the new organization: John Russell, diocesan director in Syracuse, New York, was named chairman; John Scanlon of San Francisco, vice-chairman; John Burton of Pittsburgh, secretary; and Joseph Brunner of Miami, treasurer.

The diocesan directors held their annual meeting in Los Angeles in April. At that time they approved an interim constitution, not for a National *Committee* but for a National *Conference*. Thus it became an organization incorporating all diocesan directors as members rather than simply a committee which represented them. According to the constitution the gov-

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erning body is an executive committee constituted of elected representatives from each of the twelve ecclesiastical provinces.

Father Russell continued to serve as chairman of the NCDD in conjunction with his duties as director in his home diocese of Syracuse. By early 1969, however, the work of the Conference had grown to such a great extent that a full-time executive officer was necessary. Russell moved to Washington as the first executive secretary in June, 1969 and at the same time assumed a staff position at the National Center of Religious Education — CCD.

In December 1970 Russell was succeeded by Charles McDonald of Louisville. McDonald continued in the position until June, 1972 when he succeeded Msgr. Russell Neighbor as director of the National Center of Religious Education. In turn McDonald was succeeded by one of the authors of this piece, Thomas E. Kramer of Bismarck, N.D. who upon completing a three year term, was succeeded by the other author, and current executive secretary, Robert Stamschror of Winona, Minnesota in July, 1976.

Following Russell as chairman were John Scanlon of San Francisco and Russell Novello of Boston for short periods of time. Paul Cook of Baltimore was elected president at the 1971 Annual Meeting and served until 1974 when he resigned because he was made Vicar of Education in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Terrance Sullivan of San Francisco, the vice president at the time, assumed the presidency, was re-elected in 1975 and served until 1977 when William Wassmuth of Boise was elected president.

The basic organizational structure of the NCDD remains the same as it was when it began. After several interim constitutions in the first years, the membership accepted a permanent set of By-Laws at the Minneapolis Annual Meeting in 1972.

Over the years a few changes in terminology were made which can be confusing to persons unfamiliar with the history of the Conference. The title of chairman was changed to president in the 1972 By-Laws. The original Executive Committee composed of provincial representatives became the Board of Directors in the permanent By-Laws and the officers became the Executive Committee.

## *Growing Together*

The purposes of the NCDD have evolved according to the direction of the membership whose make up has gradually changed over the years. In

1969 only one diocesan director was not a priest, but by 1974 16 percent of the directors were religious women and 21 percent were non-priests.<sup>2</sup> The complexion of the NCDD changed rapidly in the early '70s when associate and assistant directors were admitted to full membership.

In the ten years since its first meeting, the NCDD has succeeded in fostering and encouraging the communication and collaboration that formed the basis for its beginning. This has been done in a variety of ways: "Project Community" was initiated in 1968 to encourage communication and collaboration on the diocesan level; provincial and regional meetings of directors and staff were strongly encouraged and have been taking place on a regular basis in most provinces; meetings of bishops and religious education personnel on the provincial or regional levels have occurred again through the encouragement and/or initiation of the NCDD; and communications with the Bishops' National Department of Education and other national religious educational groups have been instituted or increased.

The themes of recent annual meetings illustrate the flow of this direction:

— 1971 San Diego:

"Management and Planning of Religious Education."

— 1972 St. Paul/Minneapolis:

"The Directors as an Influencing Body of Religious Educators."

— 1973 Chicago:

"The National Catechetical Directory and the NCDD as Change Agent."

— 1974 Atlanta:

"Total Religious Education."

— 1975 Omaha:

"Where We Are and Where We Could Be/Future Directions."

— 1976 Boston:

"Catechumenate: Catechesis Community." A look at the new rite of the Christian initiation of adults.

— 1977 San Francisco:

"Partners in Ministry" reflected the interrelationship of the catechetical ministry with the other pastoral ministries.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 582.

## *Learning Together*

Conference priorities reflect those of the membership. Research/resource papers, commissioned by the Conference, assist directors in their efforts to address current needs in the changing religious education scene.

— 1973

“Total Religious Education: A Blue Print for a Learning Society,” by Berard L. Marthaler; and “Family Religious Education,” by Sidney Callahan.

— 1974

“Teaching the Spirituality of Jesus: A Vision and a Blue Print,” by Matthew Fox; and “Evaluation of Religious Education Programs,” by William Coleman.

— 1975

“Motivating Adults for Religious Education,” by Kevin Coughlin; and “Catechesis and Pastoral Ministry,” by Richard Reichert.

— 1976

“The Role of the Parish Priest in Catechetical Ministry,” by Bernard Jewitt; and “The Role of the Sacraments in the Formation of Faith,” by William Bausch.

## *Special Projects*

Projects funded by the conference enable the members to collaborate in addressing specialized concerns in catechetics.

— 1974

“Special Religious Education Video-taping” (A project designed to study the processes by which the deaf, the learning disabled and mentally retarded children, adolescents and adults can be enabled); and “The Development of an Instrument for the Evaluation of Parish Religious Education.”

— 1975

“A Survey of Rural High School CCD Youth.”

— 1976

“A Filmstrip on the Parish Director of Religious Education” and “The Funding of the Development of a Native American Baptismal Preparation Filmstrip.”

— 1977

“A Parenting Program Which Helps Parents Develop Positive Self-Regard in Early Childhood.”



The NCDD has also played a major role in the development of the *National Catechetical Directory (NCD)*. Consultation has been provided on a national conference level, as well as on the diocesan level. Approximately 80 percent of the coordinators from the diocesan consultations for the *NCD* are diocesan directors of religious education.

### *Expanding Horizons*

In 1975, the Board of Directors decided to commit the financial resources of the Conference to special projects that would assist not only NCDD members in their ministry, but also special groups outside the Conference who are engaged in catechetical ministry. This action calls for the establishment of *ad hoc* task force committees who, along with committees of the Board, carry out special projects. These include: the development of a resource packet for diocesan directors in their service to parish coordinators of religious education; the development of the resource packet for integration into seminary core curriculums to assist in the formation of clergy in their responsibilities for the catechetical ministry; and the development of a resource packet with models of instruments for assessing people's needs. In addition, the Mexican American Cultural Center and the National Office for Black Catholics were each given \$5,000.

### *Vision*

From the beginning, the membership of the NCDD sensed a common purpose. These purposes have been translated into goals and objectives. There have been attempts to describe these purposes in terms of vision. This has not yet been accomplished. The continued development and evolution of purposes plus the different experiences and points of view of a frequently changing membership has delayed a consensus. However, it seems accurate to say that there has been a persistent advocacy for, and working toward, an integrated and wholistic pastoral catechetical ministry that includes within it the needed educational components of catechesis, and which, in turn, is interrelated with the pastoral ministries of liturgy and Christian service.

The history of the NCDD has not been long. It is only 10 years since its first permanent officers were elected in January 1967. But they have been 10 important years for the Church and the field of religious education. The NCDD has been in the forefront providing guidance, support and a vision to its members. May the next 10 years be even more productive.