Bishop Talks About His Goals, Ideas, Concerns

By Al Nassif
Church Today Editor

ALEXANDRIA — Bishop William B. Friend, in an interview with The Church Today, outlined future goals, ideas, and major concerns he expects to deal with during his administration as Eighth Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria-Shreveport.

"I offer these ideas with the comment that all of what I say concerning the future goals of the Diocese is subject to the outcomes of the consultations or the "Town Meetings" we are going to have," Bishop Friend pointed out.

The "Town Meetings" were proposed by Bishop Friend in his homilies during the installation ceremonies in Alexandria and Shreveport last month, and are scheduled to begin in March.

Although he has a long list of ideas for his Diocese, Bishop Friend also found time to extend thanks to his two predecessors as well as to the people of the Diocese.

"I really want to express a word of deep appreciation to Bishop Graves for all he did during his time for involving the laity and promoting the restructuring of the Church in light of the Second Vatican Council," he said.

"I express deep appreciation also to Bishop Greco who was a great innovator. He really started a lot of new ways of doing things during his time, and many of them were of such a nature they continue today. That speaks well of both his planning and of his own dedication to the people."

Bishop Friend added, "As well, I express appreciation to all the people who participate in programs. I think we have a debt to those who have helped in the past ... we also have a debt to those who will come."

Bishop Friend pointed out that one of his major goals is an effective ministry for the minorities, a commission he said he hoped "could be representative of the Black Community, the Mexican-American, the American Indians we have in the Diocese, the Cajun culture, the larger population where people could come and start sharing what it is they feel the church needs to do for members for their representative group."

He also touched on such issues as vocations, the U.S. Bishops pastoral on War and Peace, the recently promulgated New Code of Canon Law, diocesan finances and stewardship, the Church serving the people in need, and the future of Missions in the diocese.

The interview between Bishop Friend and The Church Today follows:

FUTURE GOALS:

I offer these ideas with the comment that all of what I say concerning the future goals of the Diocese is subject to the outcomes of the consultations or the "Town Meetings" we are going to have.

- One major thrust will be to provide for the spiritual, professional and pastoral growth of priests, which can be addressed in a variety of ways.
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- A major emphasis will be to identify the needs and develop the resources required for effective ministry to minorities. I have in mind here particularly the establishment and development of an intercultural commission which would be representative of the minority groups in our Diocese.
- And lastly, to intensify the efforts of evangelization and the teaching of the Church's social principles. This would be, hopefully, an enlargement of the program called RCIA, the catechumenate program, as well as the establishment of groups in parishes that will promote such activities."

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The clergy concern I would summarize in the word 'provision.' If you do not feel included in the present time in the sphere of the Church, then you will be a very active person who wants provision. You need to be seen as a person of God because of age, or illness, or imprisonment, or alienation. What provision is? What you want provision for is that people include theunchurched? Remember some people do not want to have a form of infancy with church. How can we include them?

CANT TOWN MEETINGS HELP?

I think the town meetings will help bring about a new awareness of concern and cause to realize certain things that we've overlooked, or certain things that could be done better or some new outlook for pastoral development. The town meeting in my mind is based on the teaching from scripture that the Lord said, 'whosoever two or more are gathered in his name he will be there in the midst of them.'

When a person hears another share a personal story, a personal experience, they are more common, they find each other in age or strength to come out and say we used to feel that way, I was always afraid I would be thrown back in the midst of that.

THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE CHURCH EVERY DAY

The people who live church every day, who live a human struggle, will, hopefully, those who come to the town meetings, those people who are on the edges maybe because they do not feel included at the present time in the active church, they need love. I think priests need assurance. They need affirmation. They need to know that half of the priests think they read NCR, the other half want them to read The New Yorker. The other half want them to read the Call of the Lord from the scriptures.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE ADMINISTRATION PART

I don't think so. In some instances. It is an added burden. There is a lot of confusion and counseling, for being present in critical life situations, death, marriage, divorce, sickness, pestilence. It is a great help for prayer and injury. When you look at the work, the administrative concern, it could be a case of expecting a lot, and when you look at the capacity of a person who is thinking of a vacation today, you will find all of the stuff is the priest's problem. Thirdly, what are the expectations? Presently today you have a situation in which people are calling the church to do, now we've all got to be covered in that. You have to plan for it, and an awareness of what's going on in the past, an appreciation for it, a sense of future and a plan for what's being done. It also includes the unchurched. Remember some people who are Catholic.

WHAT ABOUT DIOCESAN FINANCES AND STEWARDSHIP?

A lay person who is thinking of a vacation today, you will find all of the stuff is the priest's problem. Thirdly, what are the expectations? Presently today you have a situation in which people are calling the church to do, now we've all got to be covered in that. You have to plan for it, and an awareness of what's going on in the past, an appreciation for it, a sense of future and a plan for what's being done.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE NEW CODE OF CANON LAW?

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I want to make sure that the church is in the people's hands, and not out of the hands of the people. I want the people to have a rightful place and they are essential to the life of the church. The lay person is important in the life of the church. They need love. I think priests need assurance. They need affirmation. They need affirmation. They need to know that half of the priests think they read NCR, the other half want them to read The New Yorker. The other half want them to read the Call of the Lord from the scriptures.

Code Rejection

THE PROVINCE OF CALIFORNIA - Bishop John J. Ward of Los Angeles has called rejection of the new Code of Canon Law a "blashphemy." The bishop said, "the rejection of the code of canon law is an act of blasphemy." Bishop Ward made the statement in a statement released publicly from provisions of canon law before its promulgation by the pope on June 21, 1983.

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