



SECRETARIAT
FOR NON-BELIEVERS

Rome, 20 October, 1976

Prot.n.008034/76

Reverend and dear Father,

In the audience granted on 11 October to H.E. our Cardinal President, the Holy Father graciously approved the Secretariat's plan to convoke a Plenary Assembly of its Member Bishops next year. He recommended that the Assembly be held in the Autumn of 1977 either shortly before or shortly after the Synod of Bishops which is scheduled for that time, but for which the date has not yet been announced.

Among the themes we submitted, the Holy Father selected "Youth and the Future of the Faith". As it happens, a European Encounter on this theme was held in Rome last Autumn, under the sponsorship of our Secretariat.

In December this year, another Encounter on the same theme will be held in Bogotá, Columbia, for all the countries of Latin America and sponsored by the Commission for Dialogue of CELAM (the Confederation of Latin American Episcopal Conferences, Medellín). A third Encounter, still on the same theme will be held in India in the Spring of 1977, date and venue to be determined.

The theme obviously relates to that of the coming Synod of Bishops: "De catechesi hoc nostro tempore tradenda, praesertim pueris atque juvenibus", which is now being studied by the Conferences of Bishops all over the world. Because of this dovetailing of themes, we anticipate an ongoing exchange of information and reflective analysis that will prove mutually enlightening.

Naturally, we will be studying our theme from the particular angle that is proper to our Secretariat, therefore not excluding the dimension in mind, since it is known that our purpose is to study atheism and its various causes and manifestations, and to promote dialogue with Non-Believers who are sincerely open to collaboration (Cfr. Const. "Regimini Ecclesiae", N°102). Still, the crisis of faith among the young clearly comes within the scope of our research.

Rev. Fr. BERNARD LONERGAN, S.I.
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We intend to make full use of the reports and data supplied by the three above-mentioned Encounters, but at this point we would like to have the benefit of your competence and expertise and we beg your kind collaboration, which we have always appreciated and have come to count on, in order to decide on the preliminary steps and orientations we should follow in preparing for the Plenary Assembly.

So, once again I am presuming to impose on your generosity asking you to afford us the benefit of your lights (two or three pages worth) on the following points.

- 1) - In the context of the adopted theme, which priority issues, in your judgement, would be most deserving of consideration?
- 2) - How would you propose to present the selected issues to the Assembly Members for advance intelligence and reflection?
- 3) - What would you suggest as the best approach to the over-all problematic contained in the theme?

It would also be helpful and appreciated if you would indicate your reasons for giving priority to one issue over another; for suggesting one approach rather than another; for adopting one criterion rather than another in devising the presentation of the issues.

So that the preliminaries for the Plenary Assembly might be handled smoothly according to a reasonable schedule, we should have all replies to this letter in before Christmas. I beg you to please bear this deadline in mind and to set a suitable date for mailing your reply.

All the replies will be collated and we will send them to you in digest form indicating which issues our Cardinal President would select as the key topics for discussion at the Plenary Assembly.

On a second round, we will ask you to give us your reactions to the list of priority topics. With these responses in mind we will prepare a second draft and a final report will be mailed to the Member Bishops in late Spring 1977.

Around Eastertime, (the date is not yet decided), we will call a meeting of the 'Consulta' to examine the plans and programme of the Assembly, as provided for in the Curia Regulations (Article 126).

As a Consultor, you are of course invited to the "Consulta", but I regret to say that, because of the economy drive and our present scarce resources, alas! the Secretariat will not be able to refund travel expenses. I hope you will manage to make it - somehow.

I thank you most cordially in advance for all you can do to help in this important project and I assure you of my prayerful best wishes for all your holy endeavours.

Devotedly and gratefully in our Lord

Antônio Carlos
Sec.

Bernard J. J. J.
Sub Sec