

Bishop Rozanski joins Polish National - Catholic dialogue group

SCRANTON, Pa. - Doctrinal issues led agenda items at the spring session of the Polish National Catholic Church-Roman Catholic Dialogue held in Scranton at the PNCC's National Church Center.

Details of the meeting were reported in a May 28 news release from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington.

Two new Roman Catholic members joined the group including auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, of Baltimore, and retired Auxiliary Bishop Matthew F. Ustrzycki of Hamilton, Ontario. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops became an official participant in the dialogue at the May meeting.

Meeting May 19-20, dialogue members considered the situation of PNCC military chaplains and the options for sacramental sharing in combat zones. Members also heard an update on a proposal to permit PNCC faithful to act as sponsors at Roman Catholic baptisms, and to require the dispensation of form for licitness only in the case of mixed marriages in the PNCC.

Licitness refers to the legitimacy of a human action and its consequences, such as the administration of a sacrament or a contract. It has to do with whether or not a liturgical practice is in accord with liturgical law.

Monsignor Thomas Green of The Catholic University of America School of Canon Law in Washington reviewed presentations from the 1996 dialogue regarding the canonical status of former Roman Catholic clergy and faithful who have joined the PNCC, and the 2006 statement by the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts regarding the formal act of leaving the Catholic Church.

Members also re-examined two previous agreements between Roman Catholics and Old Catholics of the Union of Utrecht - of which the PNCC is a member - regarding the transfer of clergy from one church to the other: the agreement signed in 1996 between Cardinal Edward Cassidy, then president of the Pontifical Council for

Promoting Christian Unity, and Archbishop Antonius Jan Glazemaker of Utrecht, which was later withdrawn, and the 1999 agreement between the German Roman Catholic bishops' conference and the Old Catholic Diocese in Germany.

Signed in December 1999, the German agreement follows the basic lines of the 1996 set of guidelines developed by the cardinal and the archbishop, president of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference.

PNCC dialogue members also shared the text of the Declaration of Scranton, a document intended to clarify the doctrinal position of the PNCC on several issues.

Members also considered the April visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States and local examples of misunderstandings between members of the two churches. The next meeting is slated for Nov. 6-7, in Baltimore, prior to the fall general meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Polish National Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church have been meeting for a semiannual dialogue since 1984.

Co-chairmen of the dialogue are Bishop Edward U. Kmiec of Buffalo, N.Y., and Bishop Anthony Mikovsky of the PNCC Central Diocese, based in Scranton.

The PNCC was formed in the United States from a series of Polish Catholic immigrant groups that broke from Rome in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The split was not over doctrine, but chiefly because of pastoral and administrative disputes between Polish-American parishes and the predominantly Irish-American and German-American hierarchy of the time.