

Jews, Christians

'Respect' stressed for dialogue of Mobile group

Members of a dialogue group of Jews and Christians in Mobile will be meeting in several homes next Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. for discussions.

In inaugurating this fourth year of dialogue between local Jews and Christians, the Rev. Albert S. Foley recently spoke to members of the group about "interreligious etiquette."

Father Foley, director of the Human Relations Center at Spring Hill College, said interfaith dialogue "requires respect for other participants' beliefs, values and religious customs."

THE PRIEST POINTED OUT that the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church in 1962-65 declared, "Jews should not be presented as repudiated or cursed by God as if such views were taken from the holy Scriptures. Mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews and motivated by the gospel's spiritual love and by no political consideration, the church deplores the hatreds, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and from any source."

The Vatican Council further asked that there be no encroachment on the religious freedom of persons and associations, according to Father Foley.

He said, "In the dialogue, this set of principles enunciated by the Vatican Council requires Catholics to respect the freedom of religion of others, their freedom of beliefs, their freedom of religious observance and their freedom of conscience.

"The converse of that is also true that Catholic beliefs and moral tenets should be respected by citizens of other faiths as well."

FATHER FOLEY SAID **DIALOGUE** should not allow "the minimizing of differences found in the opposite faith in the interest of agreement on a least common denominator or on only those elements held in common by both faiths."

He said that distinctive differences should not be "played down or ridiculed by persons of the other faith. Respect for the beliefs, values and customs of others means that both those things held in common and those characteristic differences should both be held in respect and not glossed over, minimized or characterized as uninteresting, boring or odd."

IN DIALOGUE, FATHER FOLEY SAID, "exposition of basic beliefs should be done in a positive and affirmative manner, not in a negative, at-

tacking or unfavorably contrasting way."

Those who give explanations should be from the group for whom they speak. "Catholics and only Catholics should be allowed to state what Catholics believe. Jewish spokespersons should limit themselves to the presentation of Jewish viewpoints. Protestants should speak for themselves.

"No one should be encouraged to hammer out his or her own beliefs on the anvil of opposing viewpoints."

THE SPEAKER SAID THAT IN THE DIALOGUE "special care must be taken to avoid the laying on of a load of guilt for past intergroup hostilities, wars and/or persecutions."

Referring to the Holocaust, in which millions of Jews were persecuted and murdered by German dictator Adolf Hitler in World War II, Father Foley said, "Whatever may have been the faults or failings of persons responsible for the Holocaust of 35 to 40 years ago, the present generation of Christians, strong in their opposition to this type of absolutely outrageous and inhumane persecution, cannot and will not accept corporate responsibility for the demented activities of maniacs...

"Something like this has to be said also to the Catholics who witness the yearly presentation of the Oberammergau passion plays or other dramatic presentations such as that offered last year at Eastertime on national television.

"All of us who are endeavoring to build bridges toward intergroup understanding should leave the burnt bridges of the past behind us and move into a new era of religious understanding and cooperation.

AMONG OTHER POINTS MADE by Father Foley about interfaith dialogue were: Opening prayers should not be offensive to any members of the dialogue group; humor, which often is the "weapon of intergroup conflict," should be used in accordance with "good etiquette" and "brotherly love"; courtesy titles and appropriate expressions should be used "in reference to the sacred personages and features of each faith."

The priest concluded, "The basic call to righteousness and Godliness implied in any authentic religious way of life should impel us to choose good and avoid evil in our dealings with our religious neighbors. We should all attend to what the prophet Micah says that the Lord requires of us, 'to act righteously, love mercy and walk humbly before your God.'"