

Brazil's Bishops Call for Unity In Face of Arrests of Priests

Special to The New York Times

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb. 18—Brazil's bishops, faced with the arrest of priests engaged in social work and allegations of police torture, called today for church unity.

The call was directed at the conservative and radical factions in the church that have disagreed in the past over the part to be played, in social and economic reform as well as the church's relations with the military-backed government.

The document was issued at a meeting of the National Conference of Bishops in Belo Horizonte, 210 miles northwest of here. It declared that the promotion of unity was the church's first task.

"It would be lamentable to conclude that the church is destroying itself because of divergencies among its members—bishops, priests, monks and laymen—over matters of free choice and matters not yet clarified," the document stated.

Allege Torture Protested

The bishops sent a message of solidarity to one bishop

charged with subversive activities. Another message expressed indignation over the alleged torture of a priest and Catholic social worker and a third message called for prompt trial for a group of Dominican brothers and laymen held for investigation.

Portraying the part of the church in Brazil's social and economic life, the bishops declared: "The church should speak and act in its own ways for the purification and transformation of structures."

Juliana Thanked for Funds

Special to The New York Times

GENEVA, Feb. 18—The World Council of Churches thanked Queen Juliana of the Netherlands today for the contribution of an undisclosed amount she recently made to its fund to fight racism.

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