

OTTAWA -- (CCCB) President Archbishop Francis J. Spence of Kingston today met with Canadian Broadcasting Corporation President Perrin Beatty in Toronto to discuss the statement Michael Enright made in a Globe and Mail article on May 10. Mr. Enright characterized the Roman Catholic Church as "the greatest criminal organization outside of the mafia."

The Globe and Mail article focussed on Mr. Enright's probable succession to Peter Gzowski as host of the Morningside radio program, one of the most influential radio jobs in Canada. Since that article appeared, Mr. Enright has been appointed to that position. While the comments were not made "on air", Archbishop Spence was concerned that someone holding such a clearly biased opinion would hold such a position of influence with Canadians.

The CCCB asked for an immediate apology and a public retraction of the statement by Mr. Enright. While Mr. Enright did respond in a letter to the editor in the Globe and Mail, and a personal letter to Archbishop Spence, Mr. Enright's response was not deemed to be an apology but rather an explanation of why he said what he did. In his meeting with Mr. Beatty, Archbishop Spence once again asked that Mr. Enright issue "a full, frank and unequivocal public apology stating what he originally said was wrong, unacceptable, offensive and unfounded." Archbishop Spence noted there are 13 million Roman Catholics in Canada and the statement was an offense to all Catholics. The CCCB president also discussed concerns among Canada's Catholics about the CBC's fairness toward the Catholic Church, and about its lack of background information when producing items about the Church. It was felt by many that if a similar remark had been made by Mr. Enright regarding other faith groups, racial minorities or other identifiable groups, his nomination as the new morning host might have been put into question.

Archbishop Spence asked the CBC president to assure an ongoing dialogue between the CBC and the CCCB, as well as with other faith groups, in order to remedy some of these problems. He also suggested to Mr. Beatty that the CBC be a full participant in an upcoming national symposium on religion and media to be held in Ottawa next June.

The CCCB felt it had to object to the Enright statement because of an increasing climate of disregard in the media in general towards religious commitment and concerns about objectivity, fairness and balance in the media when it comes to religion.