

A Megaton of Song

Living dangerously, or so it seems, is Sister Rose Immaculate, director of the Alvernia College choir. Perched atop a happily empty explosives crate, she leads the choir in what students describe as a high-powered program of hymns, though it didn't start off with a bang. (Religious News Service Photograph)

State Bars Medicaid For Abortion on Demand

Albany—The state's commissioner of social services, George K. Wyman, has issued an order barring the use of Medicaid's fees for abortion "on demand."

Wyman said his "clarification of policy" directive was made because "a number of people have indicated recently the belief that elective abortions are reimbursable under the Medicaid program."

"This impression is clearly contrary," he said, "to well-established policy embodied in the social service law, the rules of the Board of Social Welfare and the regulations of the Department of Social Services, under which only necessary and medically indicated care is covered by Medicaid."

The controversy over Medicaid fees for abortion began during the recent state budget debate when Sen. James Donovan (R-Chadwick) announced that Gov. Rockefeller promised to suspend Medicaid payments for "on-demand" abortions for 90 days.

Sen. Donovan said the 90-day limit would give the legislature time to debate "the legality and morality of such payments."

Although the governor's staff

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Courier-Journal

U.S. Bishops to Prepare For Fall Synod in Rome

Washington — The U.S. bishops will be looking toward the international Synod of Bishops in Rome this fall as they gather for their own semiannual meeting April 27-29 in Detroit.

Preparations by the hierarchy for their participation in the synod will be the focus of the Detroit meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB).

More than 200 U.S. bishops are expected to discuss the two topics which will be considered by the Synod: the ministerial priesthood and world justice.

The bishops also will elect four delegates to represent them at the synod, which will begin Sept. 30 in Rome and last about a month.

The decision to concentrate on a single theme — synod preparations — at this year's Spring meeting marks a departure from past practice. Traditionally, the semiannual meetings have dealt with a broad range of issues of concern to the NCCB and to the United States Catholic Conference (USCC).

The Detroit meeting is also breaking new ground in another way. This year for the first time, extensive regional meetings have been held in the 11 NCCB geographical regions to prepare for the bishops' general meeting.

Participating with the bishops in some of these regional meetings have been priests, religious and lay people. Like the general meeting, the regional meetings have been concerned with the priesthood.

A summary of written reports from the 11 regional meetings will make up part of the agenda for discussion by the bishops in Detroit.

In February, Bishop Joseph L. Bernardin, NCCB general secretary, sent the bishops a topic outline to assist them in planning the regional meetings. The outline, dealing with questions concerning the priesthood, was divided into two sections: one on doctrinal considerations and the other on issues about the priesthood.

Included in the outline:

- The ministry of the Word;

- The nature and effects of the sacramental grace of the priesthood;

- The responsibility of priestly service and the means whereby the nature and effect of the pastoral ministry can be communicated to the people;

- Relations between priests and bishops (including the competence of the priest in relation to the bishop ordinary) and relations between priests and laymen;

- The relationship between priestly ministry and celibacy, and the relationship between priestly ministry and poverty;

- The representative role of the priest in relationship to the total community.

Besides the reports from the regional meetings, there will be two other principal sources of input on the questions.

One will be a document summarizing points suggested by the synod secretariat in Rome for discussion by national conferences of bishops prior to the international meeting this fall.

Another will be the bishop's own \$500,000 study of the life and ministry of priests in the United States, which was launched by the NCCB in 1967.

The overall priesthood study includes separate studies in the fields of history, sociology, psychology, theology, ecumenism, spirituality, and pastoral ministry.

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Luther: Should Excommunication Be Lifted?

Worms, West Germany — (RNS) — Groups of lay Roman Catholics here have asked Pope Paul to reconsider the papal order of excommunications issued against Protestant Reformation leader, Martin Luther almost five centuries ago.

The request was sent to the pontiff in a registered letter before Easter and copies appeared on church doors here on Easter Sunday, coinciding with the start of a celebration of the 1521 Diet of Worms.

Specifically, the letter asked Pope Paul for a "final word" on an edict, issued by Pope Leo X in 1520, branding Luther a heretic and ordering him excommunicated if he did not recant of his teachings, particularly those against papal authority and indulgences.

Following the custom of the late Middle Ages, Luther — as an accused heretic — was summoned before the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Empire, which sat in 1521 in Worms under Emperor Charles V.

The Pope's representative then argued for implementation of the excommunication threat. Luther was put on the stand to answer questions. On the second day, before the full Diet, he was ordered to recant. He refused and uttered the historic words, "Here I stand. I can do no other." The date was April 18, 1521.

On May 25, Charles V signed the "Edict of Worms" making Luther subject to burning for subverting the established order. By that time, the reformer was in the safekeeping of Frederick of Saxony.

The letter to Pope Paul asking for a reconsideration of the Catholic Church's treatment of

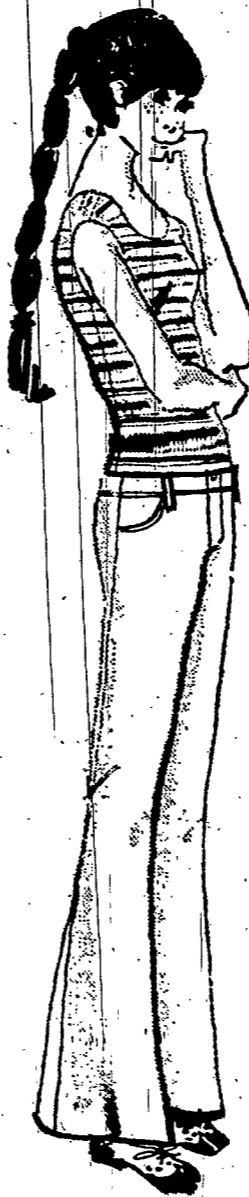
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Luther asserts that a large part of the Catholic citizens of Worms favors some restitution.

Sentiment favorable to the lifting of the excommunication against the Protestant founder has grown in recent years, partially as a result of expanding Catholic-Lutheran dialogues.

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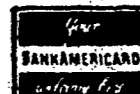
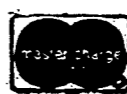
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