



A committee of the Priests' Senate of the Roman Catholic Steubenville, Ohio diocese has distributed questionnaires throughout the see to encourage the laity's participation in the process of selecting a new bishop. Bishop John King Mussio of Steubenville, who became the first bishop of the diocese in 1945 and will reach the mandatory retirement age of 75 in June, has endorsed the process, already carried out in a number of U.S. dioceses.

Vatican Radio announced that the Archbishop of San Salvador has excommunicated those responsible for the murder of a Jesuit priest and two villagers March 12 in the village of Aguilar, El Salvador. The priest was shot down while on his way, with two villagers, to celebrate Mass. The villagers were an old man of 72 and a young boy of 14.

The national secretary of Priests for Equality, an unofficial 1,300-member Roman Catholic organization in Mount Ranier, Maryland, has apologized and expressed his organization's embarrassment for the Vatican declaration excluding women from the Catholic priesthood. In an open letter to major organizations of Catholic women around the country, Father William J. Callahan, S.J. said, "We ... apologize to you publicly for the pain which the declaration brought ... We acknowledge and share the anger and frustration which many of you are feeling." Priests for Equality, which endorses equality for women in civil society and in the Church, has joined with the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) in urging the ordination of women to the Catholic priesthood.

Church-state relations in Communist Hungary are showing satisfactory development, Roman Catholic Bishop Jozsef Cserhati of Pecs, Hungary said. Writing in a Catholic publication, *Vigilia*, the bishop pointed out that the concept of "co-existence" — as related to church and government — was a "political as well as an ethical demand." "By slow degrees, he said, "but with profoundly penetrating effect, the creation of an atmosphere of co-existence has been achieved in Hungary by means of a constitution which guarantees freedom of religion and a wide scope for action on the part of the Churches. The Church is independent in its actions, performing pastoral work freely within its sphere."

Albany's 'Street Priest' Becomes Its Bishop

Albany (RNS) — The nation's youngest head of a Catholic diocese, who spent much of his priesthood fighting drug abuse and poverty in this city's slums, said following his ordination to the episcopate that he hopes to become known as Albany's "street bishop" and continue to show concern for the poor.

The 38-year-old ordinary, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany is also the first native of the diocese to hold the post. He was ordained ordinary of the diocese which covers 15 counties and includes 390,000 Catholics, in ceremonies at Siena College in suburban Loudonville.

Bishop Hubbard, in a homily after installation, appealed to the Catholics of the diocese to recognize that "we have been endowed by the Lord to reach out in service to others: the

poor, the sick, the elderly, the divorced, the socially alienated and all those in the community around us who hunger and thirst for God's word and long for the healing touch of His love."

The new bishop, the son of lower middle class parents from Troy, was ordained in 1963 in Rome. Three years later he established a drug and general crisis center known as Providence House. Later he started Hope House, a residential treatment center for drug addicts.

Well-known for his efforts to search out the troubled by walking the streets of Albany's slums, he has spent many hours in Albany Police Court, taking the part of young people in trouble. He also is known for speaking openly with those who disagree with the Church's position that it be an "advocate of change in society.

How to Help Separated, Divorced Is Theme of New York Conference

New York (RNS) — In a wide-ranging "dialogue" on the problems of separated, divorced and remarried Catholics, about 300 men and women — including about 50 clergy and religious — indicated strong agreement here on the need for pastoral guidelines by the Church in dealing with increasing numbers of alienated Catholics.

Some participants, weighing the question of an official Church ministry to divorced Catholics, agreed that diocesan agencies could be set up to act as "facilitators" in a ministerial outreach. Others saw the greater value of lay-oriented groups for divorced Catholics and urged Church agencies to work on marriage preparation and family life.

Father James Young, a Paulist of Boston, chaplain of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics (NACSDC) which has 300 member groups, said in a keynote talk, that bishops and pastors must develop

new pastoral approaches to divorced and remarried Catholics. He said they must acquire the skills needed to "patiently re-educate and support their people during this process of reconciliation."

Father Young, who teaches at the Jesuit Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, Mass., said that Catholics no longer differ from the mainstream of Americans with respect to divorce and that the "widespread phenomenon" of divorce is the primary pastoral problem for the Church.

At the same time, he observed, separated and divorced Catholics are developing a "communal dimension," and forming "amazingly effective support systems," for one another.

The Paulist, who helped form one of the first divorced Catholic groups in the U.S., said these units have, among other things, forced a clarification of the

status of divorced Catholics in the Church. He said this is exemplified by the fact that Church lawyers have "fairly well argued away" the law of excommunication for Catholics who remarry.

Other results of the divorced Catholics movement include a new awareness that annulment procedures are available, he said. He cited a 20-fold increase in annulment decisions over the past 10 years.

He said there is a "new understanding" of divorced and remarried Catholics today. "Gone is the widespread judgment that the second marriage Catholics are adulterers; gone is the fear that to admit these men and women to the Eucharist is to undermine the Church's service of lasting and permanent marriage; gone is the traditional assumption that the overwhelming majority of first marriages were valid and these second marriages necessarily invalid."

Insisting that "the people

who are most against divorce are the divorced Catholics themselves," Father Young said "they know its pain and its cost." He added that he does not see the Church "looking more benignly at divorce" either.

"I think we must prophetically and strongly denounce those socio-economic, cultural and even false religious forces which take lightly the value of permanent commitment and look kindly on divorce," he said. "We must not feed the 'divorce mentality' — it's a tragedy."

Looking ahead, Father Young saw the need for major cultural and societal changes to diminish divorce. Yet, he said divorce and remarriage "will not permanently alter one's place in the Catholic community; and people will not be excluded from the Eucharist which will become more and more "a reconciling, healing, nourishing, part of one's painful growth process."

Bishops to Study Needs of Elderly

Albany (RNS) — Bishops and diocesan representatives of eight Roman Catholic dioceses in New

York State will meet for two days in Rockville Centre, L.I., to plan and coordinate a broad Church response to

the pastoral needs of the elderly.

Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York will chair the two-day assessment, April 18-19, of the way in which the Church is now responding to the challenges of aging and seek to formulate new outreaches on a statewide basis. Bishop John McCann of Rockville Center will host the session.

Announcement by the New York State Catholic Conference, Albany, this statewide meeting of bishops and diocesan representatives in a special field has become a permanent part of the bishops' method of dealing with specific problems.

Previous meetings have studied the problems of youth, marriage, catechetics, communications and evangelization.

State Dioceses Protest Cuts

Albany, N.Y. (RNS) — A spokesman for eight Roman Catholic dioceses in New York state has strongly protested proposed cuts in state funding for health care and financial aid to the needy, urging that the burden of the state's fiscal crisis not be placed upon the poor, ill, handicapped and disadvantaged.

Charles J. Tobin, secretary of the New York State Catholic Conference, told a joint public hearing of the New York Assembly's health and social services committees that the state can find the money to feed the poor and that the proposed cuts should be rejected.

Tobin, in his testimony, was accompanied by Sister Serena Branson, SC, director of Catholic Charities in the Albany diocese, and Msgr. James Murray, executive director of Catholic Charities in the New York archdiocese.

"We appear to protest vigorously the proposed reductions in funding for health services and financial aid for those of our fellow New Yorkers who are in need of help from society," he said, indicating that such cuts would make the state's constitutional pledge to "aid, care for and support the needy" an empty promise to those "sick in body and sick at heart."

The trio of church officials specifically opposed proposed reductions in grants to home relief recipients, cuts in funding for day care and centers for the elderly, reductions in funding for hospital outpatient clinics and funding for grants to health facilities in low income areas.

In his testimony, Tobin said the money to restore these cuts can be acquired through 3 per cent reductions in the overhead of

state agencies, new tax revenues, federal assistance and by continuing the income tax surcharge until next September.

While commending the state for efforts to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse of public funds, Tobin said, however, that these good efforts should "not be an occasion to shift the burden of fiscal crisis upon the poor ... We must find ways ... to exempt the least able among us from the burden of our crisis."

"At present," he said, "all our financial aid programs are at a level of approximately 70 per cent of accepted levels of need. It is shocking beyond belief that serious consideration is being given to further reduction of these levels."

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