



### U.S. Prelates at Synod

Cardinal Timothy Manning, left, archbishop of Los Angeles, talks with Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in the Synod hall before the start of a working session in the month-long Fifth World Synod of Bishops. (RNS)

## World Synod Prepares Message to God's People

The World Synod of Bishops called to consider religious instruction spent the final week of a month-long stay in Vatican City voting paragraph by paragraph on a draft document outlining the problems and challenges of the modern world.

If Pope Paul approves, a final document, described as a "very general statement," will be issued under the title *A Message to the People of God*.

The draft, according to Religious News Service, consists of three sections. The first affirms that the Christian message "must be rooted in human culture" and transmitted "in the language of people of our time." The second says that the task of the Church is to bring the message of salvation to all mankind and to stress the prime importance of Jesus in daily life.

Part III asserts that family, parish and school, as well as priests and bishops, are responsible for catechesis.

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, president of the U.S. bishops' conference, commented at a press briefing that the success of the synod would depend not on what the final document records, but on "what happens," or fails to happen, "in the Church in years to come."

Among problems outlined in the draft document, the lack of religious freedom in many countries was stressed. "In effect, there is no true freedom (in these countries) to gather people, for catechesis, or to use suitable settings for such instruction, or to have available adequate teaching materials," the statement says. "Neither is there the right to train catechists."

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## Panamanians Vote 2 to 1 For Canal Treaties

New York (RNS)— Early reports from Panama indicate that Panamanians have voted 2-to-1 in favor of ratification of the recently signed Panama Canal treaties.

Voting was described as "massive" with many polling places reporting turnouts of 60 percent or more, with lines often stretching for a block.

Some 800,000 Panamanians over age 18 were eligible to vote in the national plebiscite. More than 3,000 polling booths were placed in schools, movie theaters and public buildings.

Brig. Gen. Omar Torrijos Herrera, who signed the treaties with President Carter, said the overwhelming vote will show the "innermost conviction" of the Panamanian people that the treaties were favorable to Panama's historical aspiration to regain sovereign

control over the canal and the Canal Zone.

"United States Senators will have to consider this vote if they have respect for the Panamanian people," the general said. "The Panamanian people are going to the polls well-informed, very conscious of the issues, and free to vote as they wish."

The treaties would turn the canal and Canal Zone to full Panamanian control by the year 2000. A two-thirds majority vote by the U.S. Senate is required for ratification of the treaties.

In the absence of an elected congress in Panama under the authoritarian regime of Gen. Torrijos, the referendum was chosen as the best means of ratifying the treaties.

Opponents of the treaties, led by the Independent Lawyers Movement, an outspoken group of 300 Panamanian intellectuals, denounced the plebiscite as

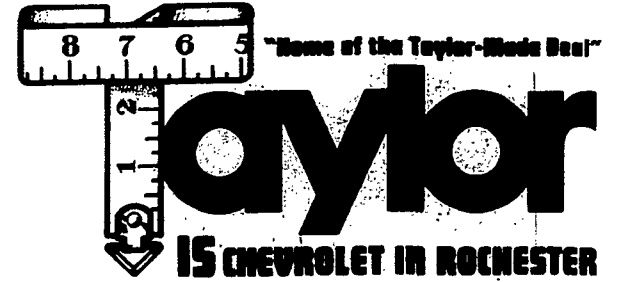
a "fraud." They said there was no way to control the honesty of the vote.

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A written intervention presented earlier by the U.S. delegates declared that a proper concern of any Christian would be "anything which endangers human life, such as wars, neutron bombs, behavioral control through surgery and drugs, genetic engineering and certain forms of population control."

Also listed were "world hunger, substandard living conditions, the plight of the elderly, or whatever violates the integrity of the human person."

"Catechetics," the Americans said, "should insist that injustice, prejudice, and discrimination are not only inconsistent with human

dignity, but also signify a serious ignorance of the nature of life in the spirit, an opposition to the work of Jesus Christ, and a scandalous offense against his Church."

At a session with reporters last week, an Indian prelate spoke of the number of countries not represented at the conference because their bishops had been forbidden to attend. Cardinal Lawrence T. Picachy, S.J., noted also that there had been little tension in the 204-member synod, in contrast, he said, to earlier such gatherings. He had been assigned to a three-member Commission for Controversies. Happily, he said, "we've been unem-ployed."

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