

# Nation to Focus on Bishops' Chicago Meeting

By Jerry Filteau  
NC News Service

The Catholic bishops of the United States will be in the national spotlight when they meet in Chicago May 2-3 to declare their collective moral judgment on nuclear deterrence and other war and peace issues.

The meeting bears the label historic even before the fact. Besides the weighty and controversial subject matter itself, the development of a pastoral letter on war and peace has placed a new focus on how the church should relate to public policy and on major internal church issues such as the authority of bishops' conferences, the style of church teaching and the relationship between universal church teachings and their application to specific situations.

The bishops' meeting follows a year in which the debate over the planned war and peace pastoral has placed the U.S. Catholic Church in its deepest public controversy since the 1973 abortion decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Indicative of the public interest in the pastoral is the number of journalists pre-registered for credentials to cover the meeting -- 250, or about triple the usual number of advance applicants. Dozens more are expected to

register at the Palmer House in Chicago's Loop, where the meeting will be held.

The draft of the pastoral letter which the bishops will debate and vote on is the third draft version of the letter and the product of the most extensive consultation ever undertaken by the U.S. bishops to prepare such a message.

Under the leadership of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, the five-bishop drafting committee met with an array of administration spokesmen, defense analysts, ethicists, theologians, pacifists and other experts while working on the document. It studied hundreds of pages of commentary and criticism on both the first and second drafts.

The nation's bishops devoted most of their regular annual meeting last November to special sessions to discuss the second draft and suggest revisions that should be incorporated into the third. Many of the bishops at that meeting had already engaged in extensive study and consultation on the issues back in their own dioceses, and a large number had already published their views on some of the questions in their own pastoral letters, newspaper columns, speeches and interviews back home.

In January representatives of the committee met at the Vatican with Vatican officials and representatives of several Western European hierarchies to discuss the pastoral.

Through successive drafts of the pastoral the Reagan administration showed an unprecedented interest in the outcome of a church document, lobbying persistently through Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and William Clark, national security adviser, for moral endorsement of administration policies that were criticized in the document.

The third draft brought refinements that the administration hailed as an endorsement of its objectives. But this reaction provoked a public rejoinder from Cardinal Bernardin and Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, president of the bishops' conference, who declared that the third draft "takes stands significantly at variance with current U.S. policy."

Amendments to the pastoral are expected to number into the hundreds, on matters great and small, but some conclusions in the third draft are not expected to be changed. These include:

- A fundamental rejection of war, nuclear or other, as a satisfactory means of settling

international disputes;

- Acknowledgement of a national right and duty of self-defense, tempered by requirements that the means of exercising that right must satisfy important moral standards;

- Categorical rejection of nuclear or non-nuclear strategies which, if carried out, would be aimed directly at civilian populations;

- Sharp questioning as to whether current U.S. nuclear strategy, declared to be aimed only at militarily important targets, would involve indirect civilian casualties on a scale so massive as to exceed any moral bounds;

- Profound skepticism about the morality of engaging in even a "limited" nuclear exchange or of being the first to use a nuclear weapon, on grounds that the dangers of uncontrollability and escalation are so great as to present an unacceptable moral risk;

- A "strictly conditioned moral acceptance" of nuclear deterrence -- but not of any and all deterrence strategies; a quest for nuclear superiority is morally unacceptable, destabilizing new systems are ruled out, serious efforts at negotiated arms curbs and reductions must be carried out, the NATO alliance has a "weighty moral responsibility" to develop an alternative that will get it out of its current nuclear first use posture;

- A thoroughgoing moral preference throughout the pastoral for non-violent approaches to conflict resolution as a direct corollary of

the just war theory -- including greater commitment to global justice and development and human rights and to the fostering of effective international structures for resolving conflicts and preserving peace.

While those main lines of

thought in the third draft seem almost certain to be retained by the bishops, the meeting in Chicago will not simply rubber-stamp the drafting committee's efforts. The history of this document and of previous national pastoral letters proves otherwise.

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## Home Confirmation

Bishop Matthew H. Clark had a full schedule of confirmations last Sunday that carried him across the county, but he did make a special stop at the home of Gerald Madalena in Pittsford. Madalena's son, Gerald, 14, suffered a broken femur bone in a moto-cross accident on March 1 and has been confined to his bed in a body cast since. Young Madalena was to be one of the confirmands at St. Louis Church that afternoon. The bishop, with the assistance of his secretary, Father Louis Vasile, and Thomas Driscoll, director of religious education at St. Louis, confirmed the youth in a brief ceremony with his family gathered around. The boy is expected to be in the cast until the first of June.

## Pope to Recite Series of Rosaries

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II is scheduled to lead the recitation of the Rosary in St. Peter's Square at 8:45 p.m. on May 7, June 4 and July 2, Vatican Radio reported April 20.

The dates mark the first time that the pope is sched-

uled to lead the Rosary in such a large public place.

Each first Saturday since the beginning of his pontificate, the pope has recited the Rosary for worldwide broadcast by Vatican Radio. But he usually leads the Marian prayer in his private

chapel or, if a first Saturday occurs during one of his trips abroad, in a local church.

Throughout the Holy Year of Redemption, which ends April 22, 1984, the Rosary is being recited each Saturday in St. Peter's Square.

## Catholics Contribute \$39.5 Million

New York (NC) — In 1982 U.S. Catholics contributed more than \$39.5 million to the worldwide General Fund of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the organization announced at a meeting of its National Council and Episcopal Committee.

Msgr. William J. McCormack, national director thanked donors for their prayers and contributions. "This generosity is all the more remarkable given the difficult times faced by so many people," he said.

The U.S. contribution to the fund, announced in early

April, is part of an expected \$80 million in contributions from nearly 100 countries in 1982. The Society for the Propagation of the Faith distributes its General Fund to support the pastoral programs and outreach of the church in some 900 mission dioceses worldwide.

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