

Synod Reports Show Openness to General Absolution

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh
Vatican City (NC) — The reports of the 12 small discussion groups at the 1983 world Synod of Bishops indicate that most delegates are open to the use of general absolution without prior confession of sins.

Only one group, the five-member Latin-speaking group, took a hold-the-line attitude expressing concern that general absolution may be used too frequently.

The small discussion groups were organized by languages.

Most of the 12 groups also spoke of the need for better preparation of confessors, suggested increased use of the sacrament of penance by clergy and favored psychological studies by seminarians and priests.

The 12 groups were asked

to give highest priority to three topics: the reality of sin; a loss of the sense of sin; and a loss of the sense of God.

The next most frequently discussed topic concerned the prophetic mission of the church.

All groups upheld use of individual confession of sins and individual absolution. However, groups varied as to degree of acceptance of general absolution, known as the third rite of penance.

One English-language group declared, "We support an extended use of the third rite of penance, together with an adequate catechesis, in certain situations."

A Spanish-language group said, "The generic risk of not giving due value to personal confession should not be an obstacle to offering reconcil-

iation through collective absolution if the necessary conditions are present."

The German-speaking group said that a double pastoral principle should be safeguarded.

Catholics who do not have the possibility of individual confession should not be deprived of sacramental grace through general absolution, yet "this practice should not be to the detriment of individual confession," the German group said.

The Latin group said that the synod "has the task of eliminating all the abuses established in the indiscriminate use of general absolution," and added that the power to decide when to use general absolution lies with the national bishops' conferences and not with individual

priests.

All groups highlighted the importance of the priest in attracting penitents to confession and in making the sacrament meaningful to them.

"If there is a crisis in the sacrament of penance today, it is also because there is a crisis in confessors," said one of the three French-speaking groups. "Either priests no longer believe enough in the meaning and the value of the sacrament, or they are not available for the sacrament."

Another French-speaking group said, "In the preparation of ministers, the important thing is to bring new priests themselves to frequent the sacrament sufficiently, to give them a solid theological training in these questions, adequate training in psychology and a good un-

derstanding of the difference between confession and spiritual direction and 'counseling.'"

All groups offered suggestions regarding the loss of a sense of sin and of a sense of God in society.

One French-speaking group said that the classical criteria for judging mortal sin are valid, but asked if "in catechesis it would be more productive to emphasize the saving will of God and his covenant of love."

A Spanish-speaking group said that "sin cannot be understood unless it is placed in relationship with God: that is to say, in relationship with his project of merciful love. God actuates his plan of salvation in history."

The need for the church to speak prophetically was noted by several groups

which stressed the need to denounce injustice in the world.

"The denunciation must be clear and unequivocal," reported one French-speaking group.

"It must be based on the dignity that man has" as someone made in the image of God and "the only goal must be peace and reconciliation," said the French group.

A Spanish-Portuguese group noted that "denunciation, when necessary, must be complemented with humility and seriousness, must be proclaimed with charity; but always in accordance with the evangelical principles: not as part of a planned battle of the classes, but with the intention of converting to the Gospel, which does not exclude the right to authentically fight for justice."

Liberation Theology Hearings Called Witch Hunt

By Cindy Wooden

Washington (NC) — Backers of liberation theology characterized Senate subcommittee hearings on the subject as a witch hunt after witnesses testified that it is a front for Marxist thought.

Several organizations were named as supporting liberation theology and/or guerrillas in Central America. Representatives said their definition of liberation theology is different from explanations given during the Oct. 18-19 hearings.

Sen. Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.), chairman of the sponsoring Senate subcommittee on security and terrorism, said church groups supporting liberation theo-

logy declined to testify at the hearings.

A witness said three Washington-area Catholic peace and justice organizations were among groups backing supporters of liberation theology. The three, Network, Center of Concern and the Quixote Center, did not testify.

Father Enrique T. Rueda, lead witness at the hearings, defined liberation theology as "a fraudulent attempt to blend Marxism and Christianity."

Dolly Pomerleau, co-director of the Quixote Center, said, "liberation theology comes out of the lived experience of the people, reflected with insight from scripture. If they want to call it Marxist, that's their busi-

ness." She added that liberation theology is a church-based Christian theology.

The theological principles commonly called liberation theology maintain that sin exists in institutions and social structures as well as in individuals.

The acting director of the Center of Concern, Jesuit Father Michael Schultheis, said that calling liberation theology a "front for communist influence" is "clearly a misunderstanding of liberation theology and all the issues involved."

He said Father Rueda has "consistently tried to paint with a broad brush in a vicious manner, the doing of

theology for people who don't have a voice, particularly in Latin and Central America."

Marxists look at justice "in terms of structural features," Father Schultheis said. So in that way, anyone who looks at injustice from more than a personal perspective is "looking from a Marxist perspective."

The Jesuit called the hearings a "witch hunt" and said they are "part of a movement to discredit this aspect of social theology -- the social aspects of our Christian-Catholic faith."

He said the Second Vatican Council, the 1971 world Synod of Bishops statement, "Justice in the World," and recent statements by the pope and various bishops teach that the church must work for structural as well as personal justice.

The witness at the hearings also said that Catholic Relief Services was among non-governmental relief agencies directly or indirectly aiding guerrilla movements.

Msgr. Roland Bordelon, regional director for Latin America at the Catholic overseas aid organization, said that although he has been regional director for only a short time, he could affirm that "CRS policy is not to fund guerrilla groups knowingly."

While aiding guerrillas "can happen by accident or indirectly," CRS does not become "involved in partisan politics," he said.

Orbis Books, the publishing arm of Maryknoll, was also listed as a supporter of liberation theology.

Maryknoll Father Paul Newpauer, Orbis spokesman, said that "some of the most interesting and exciting theology in the world" is coming out of

Third World, including liberation theologies.

He said Orbis "is happy when publicity is given to Orbis Books and the things

we publish," but the company "would hope that an investigation would be open and serious, not accusations made behind our backs."



Good Shepherd

CRAFT Show, sponsored by Altar-Rosary Society of Good Shepherd Church in Henrietta, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. in the school gym and downstairs annex, 3264 E. Henrietta Road; more than 100 crafters will show macrame, silk flowers, milk chocolates, counted cross stitch, jewelry, Christmas crafts, Alexander dolls, wooden crafts, knit, crocheted and home-sewn items, tole painting, pom-pom animals, ceramics among the features; refreshments served throughout the day.

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Pope Praises NFP At Wedding

Vatican City (NC) -- Pope John Paul II witnessed the marriages of 38 couples from nine countries in St. Peter's Basilica Oct. 9. He told them to "recognize the rhythms of human fertility" and follow them in "responsible procreation."

By endorsing "responsible parenthood" within the framework of natural fertility rhythms, the pope reaffirmed church teaching allowing the limitation or spacing of births for sufficient reasons but rejecting artificial means of birth control.

Natural family planning methods approved by the church may use a number of different techniques to determine accurately the woman's natural fertility cycle, but all the methods rely on abstinence during the fertile period rather than artificial suppression of fertility or artificial barriers to conception.

The pope spoke during a three-hour ceremony at the basilica's main altar before he delivered his noon Angelus blessing to thousands of visitors in St. Peter's Square.

The newlyweds, ranging in age from 20 to 69, took part in a nuptial Mass which the pope celebrated mainly in Latin, with songs and readings in the couples' diverse languages. The couples were from Italy, Germany, the United States, Canada, Ireland, Norway, Poland and Lebanon.

"Your responsibilities are great," the pope told the

couples. "The creator is calling you as newlyweds to procreation, to responsible procreation. To assume the task of responsible parenthood in marriage means cooperating consciously with the love of the creator."

"Responsible parenthood also means to treat the mystery of life with the greatest worship," the pope said.

Canadian Archbishop Charges Genocide to Guatemala

Ottawa (NC) -- A Canadian Catholic archbishop and several Anglican leaders have accused the Guatemalan government of genocide.

In a 21-page report issued Oct. 11 they said that human rights were being increasingly violated in the Central American country.

Archbishop James M. Hayes of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Michel Rousseau, assistant director of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, were part of the eight-member delegation that issued the report.

The church leaders said that the number of disappearances and assassinations in Guatemala are high and pro-government death squads "have again unleashed a dramatic wave of violence."

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