

Cardinal Law calls for worldwide Vatican II catechism

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh
Vatican City (NC) — Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, in a speech to the 1985 extraordinary Synod of Bishops, called for a new worldwide Catholic catechism based on the Second Vatican Council.

The cardinal said a special commission of cardinals should be appointed to prepare a draft.

Speaking in Latin Nov. 26, Cardinal Law said a single form of catechesis is needed because national catechisms are probably insufficient.

Cardinal Law, one of Pope John Paul II's synod appointees, also criticized dissent from the magisterium (Church teaching authority) in Catholic universities.

His speech and those of other speakers at the closed session of the synod were summarized by the Vatican press office.

Cardinal Law said there are difficulties in linking theology and the magisterium, but said that cannot justify open dissent within the university faculties.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who has painted a bleak picture of the post-Vatican II Church in the book, "The Ratzinger Report," said at the synod that the Church had lost some of its mystical dimension.

He said some people are suspicious of the Church and there is less love for the Church today. But he said that is not Vatican II's fault.

The cardinal said many view the Church as a multinational organization. He warned that such institutions inspire fear and hate.

The mystical dimension of the Church may be overlooked, Cardinal Ratzinger said. He called for a collegiality (shared authority of the pope and the bishops) based on scripture and the teaching of the Church fathers.

Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo, president of the Nicaraguan bishops' conference, said the Church must be above politics.

He also said that the service of the priest is linked to the mission of the bishop, and stressed priestly obedience and celibacy. Cardinal Obando Bravo added that only in exceptional cases can the priest engage in non-priestly activities.

Cardinal Paulos Tsadua of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focused on ecumenism, recommending that local churches be consulted in ecumenical talks, not treated as poor relations. He criticized ecumenical initiatives which ignore local churches.

Bishop Jose Ivo Lorscheiter, president of the Brazilian bishops' conference, said the theological and biblical nature of episcopal conferences must be developed.

Bishop Francis Xavier Sudartanto Hadisumarta, president of the Indonesian bishops' conference, called for improved relations between the Curia and local churches.

Experience shows that a too-centralized Church authority hampers the originality of the young churches, he said. The bishop also criticized what he called an overly legalistic approach to the missionary and pastoral problems of the churches.

He attacked regulations which have no pertinent purpose and which ignore the pastoral environment of churches.

Bishop Hadisumarta asked for increased powers for local bishops, based on canon law.

Cardinal Aloisio Lorscheider of Fortaleza, Brazil, a papally appointed delegate, said that out of fidelity to Christ, the Church of the future will be for the poor.

It will also be a Church for justice, he said, and a model of communion and participa-



Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, left, listens to Cardinal Eduardo Pironio of Argentina prior to the start of a synod session. (NC photo)

tion — acknowledging the rights of women and minorities.

U.S. Cardinal William Baum, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, said in a synod speech that the council's teachings on scripture have not been well-understood or correctly applied.

He said that on the basis of "historical criticism" and a purely scientific mentality regarding scripture, major teachings of the Church, such as Christ's divinity and the meaning of the priesthood, have been placed in doubt.

As a result, he said, confusion has spread in seminaries and among the laity. He called for a better understanding of "Dei Verbum," the council's main document on scripture, and a recognition that historical criticism is not enough when dealing with scripture.

Cardinal Tomas O'Faich of Armagh, Northern Ireland, said the synod must proclaim its "unambiguous" adherence to the council.

On social justice issues, he said the synod must "leave no one in any doubt that the Church is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized — not only in words but also in deeds."

Polish Cardinal Jozef Glemp of Gniezno and Warsaw said the Polish Church had largely escaped the crisis suffered by other local churches after the council.

But he said that now it is being opened to the influence of Western churches, which have had some negative effects.

Cardinal Glemp said the Church sometimes exhibits a lack of courage and a fear of the media, theologians and progressives.

But it must continue to proclaim unpopular truths such as those about abortion, marital continence and divorce, he said.

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Rochester's bishops express optimism about synod

Ever since January 25, 1985 — the 20th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's call for the Second Vatican Council and the date Pope John Paul II announced his plan for the current extraordinary Synod of Bishops — many have speculated on the outcome of the synod.

That speculation has ranged from pessimistic predictions that the synod would move the Church either too far to the left or too far to the right.

When the pope announced the convocation of the extraordinary Synod, he called the Second Vatican Council the "fundamental event in the life of the contemporary Church," and outlined three general purposes for the synod: "to relive in some way the extraordinary atmosphere of ecclesial communion created during the council, to exchange and deepen experiences and information concerning the applications of the council and to further deepen and 'enrich' the Second Vatican Council into the Church's life."

As the first meetings of the extraordinary Synod of Bishops convened in Rome last week, the three bishops of Rochester were reluctant to speculate on the outcome of the synod and remained optimistic that it will create positive initiative toward further carrying out the directives of Vatican II.

Asked last week about his expectations of the synod, Bishop Matthew H. Clark noted that each episcopal conference — or regional gathering of bishops

— was asked to write a report on the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and their implementation.

He called his own conference's response "beautifully positive" although not without criticism, and said that he believes those gathered at the synod will receive these reports.

Although an "extraordinary" synod is designated to give special attention to a subject of great and immediate concern to the universal Church, Bishop Clark said he does not expect any great developments to come out of the session.

"I don't expect any radical change or any unpleasant surprises," he said. Bishop Clark admitted, however, that anything is possible. "I grant you that we can mess things up, even with the Lord's spirit present, but I'm optimistic."

Retired Bishop Joseph L. Hogan shares Bishop Clark's positive attitude and disagrees with the appraisal of such Church leaders as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger that the synod was called by Pope John Paul II to combat "an element of regression" since the synod of 1965.

Cardinal Ratzinger has described the years since Vatican II as "decidedly unfavorable for the Catholic Church."

"I don't really believe that," Bishop Hogan said. "We're hoping that the good things that happened in the 1965 synod will continue." He added that he believes there are enough opposing voices at the synod to offset Ratzinger's efforts to return the Church to its

pre-Vatican II state. In fact, when asked about allegations that the Church has regressed since the council, the pope chose not to endorse those allegations, Bishop Hogan noted.

"Some of the information in the press lately has stressed that the pope is downgrading the role of bishops. I would like to see that happen," remarked Bishop Hogan, who strongly endorses the spirit of collegiality or shared authority promoted by Vatican II. "Since Vatican II, the Church has been considered the responsibility of everyone in it," rather than that of Church officials alone, he said.

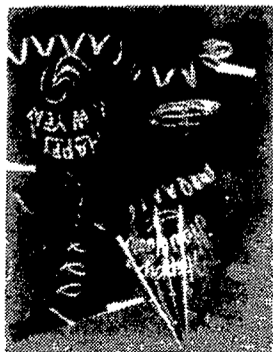
The agenda for the synod has not been made public, and Bishop Hogan said "I haven't the slightest idea," of what issues will be discussed or what the results of those discussions might be.

Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey also voiced positive but general sentiments. "Some people have been saying the Catholic Church is going downhill since Vatican II," he said in obvious disagreement. "We don't expect any solemn pronouncements from the synod."

Bishop Hickey noted that information about the synod is scarce, and if a formal assessment of the synod is made public, it will probably be in the form of an evaluation by the pope near the end of the month.

Currently, Bishop Hickey said, all we really know is that the synod will "probably be looking at what has happened in the 20 years since the last synod."

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