

# National/International Report

## No evidence that Vatican has dim view of U.S., bishop says

By Tracy Early

Brooklyn (NC) — Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati said after his first Vatican visit as an officer of the U.S. bishops' conference that he found no evidence for reports of negative Vatican attitudes toward the Church in this country.

Accounts of officials in the Vatican Curia, the Church's central administration, "wringing their hands" over the Church in the United States are largely an invention of the press, he said in an interview May 24 after an address in Brooklyn.

Archbishop Pilarczyk, who was elected vice president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops last November, was in Rome with other conference officers the week of May 18 to talk with officials of congregations and other units of the Vatican administration. He called it a very useful meeting, in which Vatican officials "did not give any indication whatsoever that they thought the Church in the United States was going down the tubes."

Archbishop Pilarczyk also disputed suggestions that Vatican officials have been swayed by right-wing groups writing to complain of alleged deviations in the U.S. Church. "I do not think the right wing has that kind of clout," he said. "Vatican officials are not naive. They are most capable of evaluating the mail they get."

Speaking at St. James Cathedral in Brooklyn, Archbishop Pilarczyk addressed

the topic, "Preaching Cultural Heresy: The Message of Jesus in a Post-Christian Age." The talk was part of the cathedral's Shepherds Speak series, which brings bishops from across the country to speak at Sunday vespers between Easter and Pentecost on various issues.

Archbishop Pilarczyk argued in his talk that today the Catholic believer "is increasingly in a posture of heresy, of rejecting commonly accepted social beliefs, of standing outside the mainstream."

He said today's culture is dedicated to its own personal needs in contrast to the teaching of Jesus that "anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

The conflict also occurs, he said, when sexual activity is defined as "just one more personal need" that must be satisfied in whatever way the individual prefers. "The Church is accused of being 'hung up' on sex," he said. "This is to put the question into the wrong context. The Church is not so much 'hung up' on sex as 'hung up' on the meaning of one of the most fundamental of human relationships."

Human behavior in these areas has always fallen short, Archbishop Pilarczyk acknowledged. "What is new in the contemporary situation," he said, "is that such conduct is not seen as an aberration, much less as sinful, but as logical and appropriate



**VIETNAMESE DISPUTE** — About 100 Vietnamese Catholics chant "No Father Duong" in the courtyard of the San Jose chancery in Los Altos, Calif. The protesters were unswayed by the reconciliation between two of their leaders and San Jose Bishop Pierre DuMaine and continued their opposition to Father Paul Duong's appointment as pastor of a mission church they have occupied.

behavior based on social presumptions shared, at least implicitly, by the society at large."

Archbishop Pilarczyk said in the interview that the ability of President Reagan to win electoral success by identifying himself with traditional values did not disprove the thesis of a conflict between Christian and cultural

values in the United States.

"Sometimes the symbols people choose for themselves — and the president is a symbol in a sense — are what people think they ought to want," he said. "Our real values are not shown just by what we do on a Tuesday in November, but by our behavior for the rest of the year."

## Black Catholic congress emphasizes evangelization, pride in 'blackness'

By Julie Asher

Washington (NC) — Black Catholics gathered in Washington May 21-24 to develop a national pastoral plan emphasizing evangelization, and to tell the larger U.S. Church that they're proud of their black heritage and their Catholicism.

Pastoral priorities approved at the National Black Catholic Congress held at The Catholic University of America concerned evangelizing the larger black community, being black and Catholic, leadership and pastoral ministry, and outreach to the community through schools and parishes.

Congresses for black Catholics first occurred in the 19th century, with five such meetings held between 1889 and 1894 to focus on segregation within the Church. The May 21-24 congress was the first held in this century.

The 1,500 delegates from 110 U.S. dioceses — among them 10 delegates from the Diocese of Rochester — also issued a strong call for the appointment of black bishops as heads of dioceses when vacancies occur.

Bishop Joseph L. Howze of Biloxi, Miss., is the only one of the nation's 11 black bishops who heads a diocese.

The delegates also asked that dioceses allocate money through the year 1990 to implement their plan.

Delegates met in celebration, reflection, small-group meetings and general sessions to hammer out their plan from a working document of concerns gathered at listening sessions of black Catholics held in U.S. dioceses over the last several months.

The congress was attended by the nation's black bishops and a number of white bishops, including Archbishop James Hickey of Washington, Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, Archbishop Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles and Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York.

Delegates' top priorities included:

- Evangelization by blacks of the country's 6 million to 10 million black Americans who have no formal church affiliation.

- Study of cultural and historical contributions of black Americans to church and society through local committees of black historians and scholars.

- Strengthening of black family values through parish family life programs that affirm black traditions, history and development.

- Comprehensive training for black men and women for ministry within the Church at all levels.

- Continual spiritual development through retreats and days of recollection reflecting blacks' lived experience.

- Church decision-making at all levels involving blacks, showing appreciation of

black culture.

- Continued financial support for Catholic schools in black communities and special efforts to ensure quality education.

- Developing black parishes as "beacons of hope" to communities through vibrant liturgies, social outreach and Church involvement in community problems.

Delegates proposed that the pastoral plan be carried out through joint efforts of parish leadership, parish councils and committees, diocesan offices for black Catholics and diocesan officials.

As he opened the congress, Auxiliary Bishop John Ricard of Baltimore, congress chairman, told delegates to remember they spoke for all U.S. black Catholics and that their work was about "nation-building."

"I somewhat tremble to think how risky it is to bring folks together from so many places, with so many different ideas," he said. "Some may feel it's too soon, it's too late, we won't ever make it or question why at all. But we are ready and it's time."

In his speech, Cardinal O'Connor urged delegates to guide him and his fellow bishops. "In New York there is a lot of talk about ministry 'with' blacks, not 'to' blacks," the cardinal said. "We're dead as a Church if we think we minister 'to' blacks and do not accept the enrichment they bring."

He asserted that the Church "must weep" over the fact that only 1.3 million of the 30 million U.S. blacks are Catholic, he said. The Church must tell blacks all over the country "they need not abandon their blackness by becoming Catholic," he said.

Keynote speaker Franciscan Sister Francesca Thompson, assistant to the dean and associate professor of Afro-American studies at Fordham University in New York, said the congress was about black power.

She told her listeners to be discontent and restless to break down walls of bigotry in the Church and society.

Some see "black power" as frightening, she said May 22, but it stands for black freedom, black self-determination and black pride.

In an address punctuated by applause and shouts of "Amen" and "Yes," she said it was time for black Catholics to become "inheritors of the kingdom, not merely the stepchild."

Black power, she added, does not mean blacks taking over the Church or being a threat to whites, but instead is a promise for a better Church.

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