



Mission mandate

Father Silverio Rueda is a man with a mission — to bring alive the needs of his Ecuadoran archdiocese to North American congregations. See page 8.



Offensive strike

Much like the players in the NFL, some high school grid teams went on strike offensively last week as three games involving diocesan teams were shutouts. See page 16.

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Attack on dissent highlights bishops' meeting

By Jerry Filteau

Los Angeles (NC) — His frontal attack on dissent from Church teaching made front-page headlines nationwide when Pope John Paul II met Sept. 16 with the U.S. bishops, but the pope and bishops covered a wide range of other issues as well.

The pontiff said it was a "grave error" to think one could be a "good Catholic" while dissenting from some of the Church's moral teachings. He singled out dissent on abortion and on "sexual and conjugal morality, divorce and remarriage."

He also said it was wrong to hold that such dissent "poses no obstacle to the reception of the sacraments" — a comment that drew extensive questions from reporters at a press conference with an official of the U.S. bishops' conference later.

During the half-day meeting, however, the pope also called on the bishops to:

- Get more involved in their Catholic colleges and universities "to safeguard and promote their Catholic character."

- "Present as effectively as possible" the Church's teachings against artificial contraception and promote natural family planning.

- Maintain Church discipline restricting "the use of general absolution" as a substitute for individual confession.

- Uphold the Church's "unpopular" teaching on homosexual activity "in the pastoral care that you give to homosexual persons."

- Respect the primary "right and duty of parents" in any sex education programs.

Pope John Paul also quoted his predecessor Pope Paul VI at some length in supporting the efforts of the U.S. bishops to maintain a consistent ethic of life and "oppose whatever wounds, weakens or dishonors human life."

The pope did not do all the talking at the meeting. In fact, his talk was divided into four sections, and he delivered each separately in response to a presentation by a bishop. Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago led off for the bishops, after a brief welcome to the pope by Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"The majority of Catholics in the United States have a deep faith and accept the Church as described in the conciliar documents (of Vatican II)," Cardinal Bernardin



WITH THE BISHOPS — The bishops applaud as the pope walks among them in the San Fernando Mission.

Joe Rimkus Jr./NC News

said.

He said non-Americans may have the impression of a "certain rebelliousness" among American Catholics, but this is due to their tradition of freedom. Many Americans "almost instinctively react negatively when they are told that they must do something, even though in their hearts they may know they should do it," the cardinal said.

In his response Pope John Paul stressed the role of the successor of Peter in assuring

Church unity, and the need for all local churches to retain full communion with the Holy See.

Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, the second bishop to speak, addressed the issue of Church moral teaching in a changing and questioning society.

Archbishop Quinn said there are "critical new realities" confronting the U.S. Church which bishops and moral theologians are trying to deal with.

Among moral challenges in America he cited were affluence, high divorce rates, widespread abortion, the sexual revolution, U.S. global military and economic power, and the challenges posed by rapid scientific and technological advances, the "dramatically altered" status of women in society, and the changed views and expectations that have come with a high education level of U.S. Catholics.

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Bishop Clark points to papal dialogue as a sign of hope

By Teresa A. Parsons

Last Wednesday was the first time in eight years the U.S. bishops have assembled to meet with Pope John Paul II in the United States.

But as Bishop Matthew H. Clark pointed out, the meeting was also the first such gathering in the U.S. episcopal conference's history in which bishops had an opportunity to speak to the Holy Father as well as to listen to him.

In Bishop Clark's view, the fact that such an exchange took place was the "fundamental good" of the meeting, above and beyond anything that was said. "I felt that the meeting was overall a great success and very much a positive step," he said. "My hope is that another time, next year or the year after or in subsequent events, that we will have a free exchange about the issues raised by our four bishops at the level at which they raised them."

During previous meetings between the pope and U.S. bishops, including Pope John Paul II's most recent 1979 stop in Chicago, the pontiff's address has been the only one on the agenda.

On Wednesday, September 16, at Our Lady Queen of the Angels Seminary in Mission San Fernando, however, the pope engaged in what has been called a "structured dialogue" with

four bishops chosen as representatives by a majority of their nearly 400 colleagues.

The dialogue was anything but free-flowing since, as Bishop Clark pointed out, the speeches given by Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago and Archbishops Rember G. Weakland of Milwaukee, John R. Quinn of San Francisco and Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati all had been submitted to the Vatican well in advance of the meeting.

In their addresses — which focused on the laity, the relationship between the universal Church and local churches, vocations, and the Church's moral teachings — the four bishops tried to explain such cultural features of American life as the desire for participation and consultation in decision making, and the innate American resistance to orders without explanations.

"The four bishops who spoke ... put forward quite well a lot of the pastoral concerns that we have," Bishop Clark said. "Cardinal Bernardin in particular called for consistent, frank dialogue between and among the bishops themselves and the Holy See."

The pope's response reflected the formality of the process, stressing the same issues he emphasized throughout the trip. He urged the

bishops to uphold Church teachings in regard to artificial contraception, abortion, women's ordination and the pastoral care of homosexuals. He also cautioned that it would be a grave error to think that an individual's dissent from Church teaching poses no obstacle to his or her reception of the sacraments.

"He said more than that, although he certainly said those things," Bishop Clark said. "And I think that though (such statements) may have disappointed some, it should hardly surprise people that he's rather consistent in the message that he delivers. I don't think that was the cause of any particular disappointment on the part of the bishops."

Bishop Clark did express some disappointment in the level at which the pope responded. "His response to us did not touch on all the issues that we had raised, and centered in particular on areas of pastoral concern that the pope almost always addresses," he said. "At another time, I think that it would be fruitful for all of us to enter into these issues at the same level and to have a free exchange about the ideas, concerns, pastoral implications and pastoral difficulties that surround them. And I feel that connection wasn't made this time."

The bishop was nonetheless pleased by the

meeting's implications for future interactions. "I think that the fact that (the pope) heard those concerns, and the fact that there will be future meetings might very well lead to another step in that development — that is, a freer exchange on the spot between the bishops and the Holy Father and indeed, among the bishops themselves," he said.

When and if such an exchange does take place, it is not likely to be in a forum that draws public scrutiny as intense as that focused on last week's Los Angeles meeting, Bishop Clark observed. "I really wouldn't expect him to open up in that kind of freewheeling discussion because of the implications of almost everything he says," he said. "There are also just purely cultural differences that need to be worked through in order to come to that. The Roman way is to deal more in the general picture of things."

The structured dialogue was just one illustration of how the U.S. bishops' increased participation in planning the papal trip paid off. Bishop Clark recalled that a delegation of bishops visited Rome in March to express their hopes and concerns in preparation for the visit. "This visit was prepared for with much more

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