

# World & Nation

## C-J Capsules

### Priest receives death threats

(NC) — The Brazilian bishops' Pastoral Land Commission wants the government to protect one of its directors who might be marked for death. In a mid-September statement the agency said Father Ricardo Rezende, a regional director in Conceicao do Araguaia, Brazil, is being targeted by the same kind of accusations and innuendos that were aimed at his predecessor, Father Josimo Moraes Tavares, who was murdered in May 1986. It cited an article in the Brazilian newspaper O Estado de Sao Paulo in which Ronaldo Caiado, president of the Rural Democratic Union, a coalition of large landowners, called Father Rezende a "highly dangerous bandit."

### Ukrainians begin to celebrate

(NC) — Ukrainian Catholics have begun to celebrate the 1988 millennium of Christianity in what is now the Ukraine with activities ranging from a synod of Ukrainian bishops in Rome to a \$134,000 national newspaper insert in the United States. Sponsored by the Ukrainian dioceses of Stamford, Conn., and St. Josaphat in Parma, Ohio, the four-page, color "special advertising section," appeared Sept. 18 in USA Today and featured articles on the church. The millennium marks the occasion, in 988, when Vladimir, grand duke or prince of Kiev, converted to Christianity, along with his nation of Kievan-Rus. Later declared a saint, Vladimir is honored both by Ukrainian Christians and by Russian Christians, who trace the founding of medieval Russia to some of Vladimir's descendants.

### Bishop offers opinion on AIDS

(NC) — Following church law on sex is the "only sure antidote against AIDS," said Bishop Elden F. Curtiss of Helena, Montana. "We must make it clear to our young people that the only sure antidote against AIDS and the destruction of many lives is abstinence and monogamous marriage," Bishop Curtiss said. "These (young) people may be the only ones who will survive the epidemic in the long run," he said. Bishop Curtiss made his comments in his regular column, "From My Perspective," in the September issue of The Montana Catholic, the Helena Diocese's monthly newspaper.

### No 'openness' in Russia?

(NC) — Two Brazilian bishops who recently visited the Soviet Union said that government's "glasnost" (openness) policy, has done little to ease restrictions on religion. Many churches are still closed, there are limits on the number of students allowed to enter seminaries and orders of Catholic nuns have been denied permission to open convents, said Auxiliary Bishop Luciano Mendes de Almeida of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The type of openness Soviet leaders are promoting requires "full freedom of conscience," he said in a Sept. 24 Vatican Radio interview. Bishops Mendes de Almeida is president of the Brazilian bishops' conference. He and Bishop Ivo Lorscheiter of Santa Maria visited the Soviet Union Sept. 9-17 on a trip arranged by the Russian Orthodox Church.

### Vatican mum on possible meeting

(NC) — The Vatican had no immediate comment on the possibility of a meeting between Pope John Paul II and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev during Gorbachev's expected visit to Italy early next year. Father Giovanni D'Ercole, assistant Vatican press spokesman, said Sept. 24 that the Vatican would not comment until plans for the Soviet leader's visit to Italy were clearer. In 1986, when a Gorbachev visit was also being discussed, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the pope would "very probably" meet the Soviet leader if an audience were requested.

## Laity synod begins a year behind schedule

By Greg Erlanson

Vatican City (NC) — A year later than scheduled, members of the hierarchy will begin gathering in the Vatican's synod hall with Pope John Paul II Thursday, October 1, to ponder "the vocation and the mission" of the world's nearly 840 million lay Catholics.

Originally scheduled for 1986, the laity synod was delayed a year because of the 1985 "extraordinary synod" marking the anniversary of Vatican II.

Because of the enormous diversity of experiences included in the laity theme, synod organizers encouraged widespread consultation. Last April the pope ordered publication of the synod's working paper, or "instrumentum laboris" to stimulate the consultation. He also has appointed a record number of lay observers and "experts" and two lay "associate special secretaries" to the month-long synod.

The synod's work breaks down into speeches by bishops to the general assembly followed by small group sessions on specific themes and a final report which includes the results of those sessions.

The report will be given to the pope at the end of October.

Unless he declares otherwise, the synod's function is strictly advisory. The pope can choose to publish that final report or write one of his own, as he did with "Familiaris Consortio" following the 1980 synod on the family. But because of the subject matter, officials and delegates expect the report to be made public immediately — as happened after the 1985 extraordinary synod on the Second Vatican Council.

Some observers, such as U.S. Catholic newspaper editor and president of the Catholic Press Association Albina Aspell, will be allowed to address the assembly, the first time this has happened in an ordinary synod.

Other U.S. observers are Knights of Columbus head Virgil Dechant and his wife, Ann, and permanent deacon Walter Sweeney, director of the New York Archdiocese's department of Christian and Family Development.

Representatives of the U.S. hierarchy include Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin, Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, Archbishop John L. May, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Stanley J. Ott of Baton Rouge, La.

In addition the pope appointed Archbishop Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles and Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Pittsburgh, as well as Redemptorist Father Thomas Forrest, former head of the international Catholic charismatic renewal organization.

The formal theme of the synod is "Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World 20 Years after the Second Vatican Council."

From the responses of 80 bishops' conferences to a Vatican questionnaire as well as submissions from dozens of lay and ecclesial associations, synod general secretary Archbishop Jan Schotte and other experts and officials have culled several dominant con-



The Associated Press

Pope John Paul II speaks in Polish to the people of Hamtramck, Detroit's Polish enclave, on the last stop of his 10-day tour. He stands before a painting of Our Lady of Czestochowa, by Hamtramck artist Dennis Orkowski.

cerns likely to be addressed during the October meeting:

- The role of the laity in the world: one concern is the strengthening of the connection between faith and daily life.
- The role of the laity in the church: in many countries following Vatican II, lay ministries ranging from eucharistic ministers to parish councils, experienced a "great flowering," in the words of Pope John Paul. In the same period the number of priests has declined.
- The role of women in the church and the world: bishops have expressed concern

about the participation of women in church decisions and the ordination of women to the diaconate.

- The continuation of lay spiritual formation: if lay Catholics are to live their faith they must continually develop their understanding of the theory and practice of the Christian life.

- The role of lay movements and associations in the church. In Western Europe, Latin America and Africa "new movements" are increasingly valued for their spiritual formation and public witness.

## Lay voices to be heard in synod deliberations

By John Thavis

Vatican City (NC) — The synod of bishops on the laity will follow an established rhythm and set of rules, but it also will include several innovations aimed at bringing lay voices into the synod hall.

Pope John Paul II has named an unprecedented number of lay auditors and lay theological experts to the bishops' assembly Oct. 1-30, and has appointed for the first time two lay "special secretaries" to aid in synod work.

In a waiver of synod rules, several lay observers are expected to address the general session of the approximately 230 voting delegates, although the synod secretary general, Archbishop Jan Schotte, has not said how or when that will occur. One U.S. observer, Catholic Press Association President Albina Aspell, is to give a 20-minute talk on the laity and mass media, the association announced in September.

Lay representatives also will report to the synod, probably shortly after its opening, on a major consultative meeting last May among members of Catholic lay associations.

For all that, the synod's voting members remain bishops and, in a few cases, priests. The bishops give the major speeches, introduce propositions and amendments, vote on the proposals and pass their recommenda-

tions on to the pope, who presides over the synod assembly.

While synods are normally consultative and not binding, they have come to play an important role in the life of the church. Recommendations from the four last regular synods have resulted in major papal documents on evangelization, catechetics, family life and penance.

In 1985, the pope agreed to allow the synod, after its extraordinary meeting on the Second Vatican Council, to publish its own document immediately. Vatican sources say one technical issue at this year's assembly will be whether to return to the previous procedure of handing over conclusions to the pope, who would then write a follow-up document.

The internal rhythm of the synod has three distinct phases. During the first phase, lasting a week or longer, individual bishops give speeches of no more than eight minutes each on particular aspects of the general topic, which this year is "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World 20 Years after the Second Vatican Council." Bishops can submit longer speeches in writing.

According to Archbishop Schotte, this

first week is perhaps the most important moment of the synod, when "everyone is equal" and when local viewpoints open up to universal concerns. Another Vatican official said first-week speeches that have the best chance of making it into a final document are those focused on a single theological point.

The second phase, usually during the meeting's second and third weeks, involves small-group discussions. Bishops are normally divided by language, a moderator is chosen, themes are developed and a consensus on issues is sought. It is a period of hard bargaining over ideas and resolutions.

In the third phase, resolutions are refined through debate and voting in the full assembly. The resolutions adopted are normally included in a final report, which is prepared afterward by the synod secretariat and presented to the pope for his approval and possible elaboration into a document.

Synod proceedings are closed to the press and public, but the Vatican holds daily briefings on the discussions and provides summaries of bishops' talks. Normally, several press conferences with synod participants are held at the Vatican, and the bishops of individual countries frequently hold their own press briefings.