

Cable broadcasts of papal tour called milestone in Church media use

By Sister Mary Ann Walsh
 Washington (NC) — The live cable-television coverage of the visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States was a significant milestone for Church use of the media, said officials involved in the broadcast.

Richard Hirsch, secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Department of Communication, called the broadcast the "most significant electronic media activity that the Church in this country has ever engaged in."

The 10-day broadcast was sponsored by the USCC and was co-produced by the Eternal Word Television Network, which is distributed to cable outlets nationwide, and by the U.S. bishops' Catholic Telecommunications Network of America, which broadcasts to U.S. dioceses that then are responsible for local distribution.

Called "Papal Visit '87," the broadcast was carried by about 700 cable TV outlets in 44 states and had a potential audience of 20

million homes. It was funded by the annual Catholic Communication Campaign.

Mother Angelica, the Alabama nun who started the Eternal Word Television Network in 1981, said the coverage was "extremely profitable for the Church" both spiritually and in a business sense.

The network picked up about a dozen new cable outlets immediately after the venture, she said. People also called to say they had returned to the sacraments.

The broadcast "allowed Americans to see the Holy Father for just what he is" without interpretation by journalists, Mother Angelica said. People were impressed by the "tremendous pageantry, the inspirational liturgies."

Father Bernard R. Bonnot, president of the bishops' network and a co-anchor of the broadcast with Mother Angelica, said the endeavor was "a positive experience for the Church in the United States and Catholic communications in general" because it

showed that the Church can use telecommunications effectively.

The project involved "multidimensional collaboration" between the USCC; the two Catholic networks; television station WRAL in Raleigh, N.C., which provided technical facilities for the ongoing broadcast; and numerous Catholic laypeople, he said.

Hirsch said the program showed a potential for cooperation between the bishops' and Mother Angelica's networks. Likewise, Dominican Father Gerald Burr, programing director at the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America, said it became clear during the broadcast that the two networks are "very similar." It showed

that "we don't need to compete" and that "we're both serving the Church," he said.

He predicted more joint ventures will come from the effort and said live coverage by Mother Angelica's network this November of the U.S. bishops' general meeting in Washington was being discussed.

The bishops' meeting in recent years has been broadcast live by the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America to its affiliated U.S. dioceses but not in any major way to the public at large.

People "would like to see what the bishops are saying," said Mother Angelica. "It's time to get it from the horse's mouth."

Manual offered to aid in implementing economics pastoral

Washington (NC) — The U.S. Catholic Conference office for implementation of the U.S. bishops' 1986 pastoral letter on the economy has published a manual for diocesan implementation of the letter.

The Manual for Diocesan Implementation is available at \$20 per copy from the USCC Office of Implementation, 1312 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.



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