

World & Nation

Bishops to vote on retirement issues at November meeting

Washington (NC) — When U.S. bishops meet next week in Washington, they will consider a proposal to initiate a national annual collection aimed at helping men and women religious meet a retirement need estimated at \$2.5 billion.

At their annual fall meeting, November 16-19, the bishops are also expected to vote on guidelines for relations between bishops and theologians and for resolving doctrinal disputes through dialogue.

In addition, the bishops' conference is scheduled to vote on retirement norms for diocesan priests proposed by the bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry.

The norms "suggest that retirement from a diocesan appointment does not imply an end to ministry. Rather they speak of an entry into a third age where the Spirit is calling us to reflect upon, to integrate, and to complete the ministry to which we were called."

Bishops should "ensure that diocesan programs give specific consideration to the spiritual growth of third-age priests," committee members asserted. They called for consideration of senior priests in all diocesan retreats, conferences and support groups.

Bishops normally should allow any priest to retire when he has reached the age of 75, according to the committee, but bishops should consider naming a retirement peer group committee to help priests plan the time of their retirement. In accord with canon law, pastors are asked to submit letters of resignation by the age of 75.

The proposed collection to fund the needs

of retired religious, which the bishops will also consider next week, would begin in September 1988, and would be conducted for 10 years "unless the need is met before then." The collection proposal also calls for an ongoing public awareness program to support the appeal, and provides that any funds collected be administered and disbursed through a formula developed by the Tri-Conference Retirement Project.

Established in May 1985 to address retirement needs of religious, the tri-conference project is sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.

The collection proposal will be "one of the major items (the bishops) face," according to Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara of Indianapolis, a member of the NCCB Administrative Committee which authorized that the proposal be considered at the general meeting.

The retirement needs of religious are "a national concern for the Catholic Church in the United States and I don't think it can be addressed adequately by local dioceses," he said. "The service of religious has gone across diocesan lines for so many years and in so many different apostolates.... Somehow the bishops have to address it."

At their November gathering, the bishops also plan to study proposed guidelines for resolving doctrinal disputes and improving relations with theologians at the local level.

Proposed by the bishops' Committee on Doctrine, chaired by Bishop Raymond W. Lessard of Savannah, Ga., the 50-page document — titled "Doctrinal Responsibilities: Procedures for Promoting

Cooperation and Resolving Disputes Between Bishops and Theologians" — follows several major controversies in which the Vatican has intervened to end dissent by U.S. Catholic theologians or religious thinkers.

The document is reportedly not a reaction to such recent cases as those of moral theologian Father Charles Curran or Seattle Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen. Instead, it is said to have originated with a joint project begun in 1980 by the Catholic Theological Society of America and the Canon Law Society of America.

The document claims as its chief goal the fostering of "collaboration between bishops and theologians for the good of the entire Church."

Part of its purpose, the document also states, is avoiding situations that lead to public dissent and confrontation and to avoid premature appeals to Rome to handle disputes that might better be resolved at the local level.

The proposed guidelines argue that if bishops and theologians establish an atmosphere of "mutual respect and trust" by getting to know one another personally and collaborating regularly on various issues, any differences or disagreements that occur are more likely to be resolved positively.

If real or apparent differences do arise, the document proposes a four-part procedure of "formal doctrinal dialogue." The "four tasks" of dialogue that it cites are: gathering data; clarifying meaning; determining the relationship of the points at issue to Catholic tradition; and identifying implications in the life of the Church.

If the bishops approve the proposal, the guidelines will be in effect for five years, allowing for further refinement or develop-

ment at that time.

Other items on the bishops' agenda include:

- an update of the bishops' 1981 statement on policy in Central America;
- a national pastoral plan for Church ministry to Hispanics;
- a statement critical of school-based health clinics which provide students with contraceptives and abortion services;

- a proposed new rite for use in celebrations of marriage between people of differing faiths;
- proposed norms outlining responsibilities of dioceses in dealing with the retirement of their priests;
- a proposal that December 12, the day Our Lady of Guadalupe is said to have appeared in Mexico, be raised to the rank of a feast in the U.S. Church calendar, but that it not be considered a holyday of obligation;
- a 1988 budget for their national offices and activities, and a proposal to raise the assessment on dioceses and archdioceses for support of those activities from 13.3 cents per Catholic in 1988 to 15.7 cents in 1989.

Diocesan Appointments



Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointment:

Father Charles L. McCarthy from Blessed Sacrament to Holy Rosary Church, Rochester, as parochial vicar; became effective October 27.

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