



No giving up

Returning from a recent tour of Nicaragua, an NC reporter presents varied observations on the troubled nation's social, religious and political scene. See pages 3, 4 and 5.



Tournament roundup

The Knights of McQuaid were just one of the boys' basketball teams in the diocese to find 'lumps of coal' in their Christmas Tournament stockings. See page 9.

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'Private' letter shows

AIDS paper may get review at bishops' June meeting

By Jerry Filteau

Washington (NC) — The U.S. Catholic bishops, divided over a statement on AIDS issued by their Administrative Board in mid-December, may review the document when they hold their next general meeting at the end of June.

The chief point of controversy the statement's reference to condom information in public education campaigns against AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome. While saying it condoned neither contraception nor non-marital sex, the statement said the church could tolerate the inclusion of accurate information about prophylactics in



O'CONNOR — neither sought nor approved letter's release, office says.

public education programs about AIDS.

The plan for a possible review of the board statement by all the country's bishops was announced in a private letter sent to the bishops December 17 by Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference.

In the letter, Archbishop May said the

statement "needs to be discussed in greater depth by the membership (of the bishops' conference). We might all benefit from a more complete review of the matter. I suggest that our meeting in June might include a full discussion... We might then be able to agree on certain propositions which could be the basis for clear conference policy."

Excerpts released by the New York archdiocese showed that Archbishop May had also invited comments and suggestions from the bishops, and said he would review the possibilities with the USCC Administrative Board when it meets in March. The board, which approved the original AIDS statement, consists of about 50 of the nation's roughly 300 active bishops.

Neither the existence nor the contents of the December 17 letter were revealed, however, until the communications office of the Archdiocese of New York quoted extensively from it in a December 28 news release the office said was intended to give journalists "further clarification and understanding" about the AIDS statement.

Archbishop May and Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, one of the chief drafters of the AIDS statement, reacted sharply after a New York Times report on Archbishop May's letter interpreted it as meaning the bishops "have set aside for now" the AIDS statement.

"At this time, the statement of the Administrative Board stands and is neither being withdrawn nor temporarily set aside," Archbishop May said in a statement released by the NCCB-USCC headquarters in Washington after the Times report appeared December 29.

The "primary purpose" of any discussion of the statement at a general meeting "would be to allow all the bishops to formulate clear conference policy on aspects of the AIDS issue to whatever extent this is deemed necessary," he said.

The archbishop said his letter to the bishops also reviewed "in some detail the careful preparation" that went into the AIDS statement and discussed "widespread misperceptions" of what the document actu-

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UPI-Reuters/NC News

SPIRITUAL INDEX — Christians should make an effort to take spiritual stock of their lives as 1988 rings in, Pope John Paul II said during his last general audience of 1987. The pope suggested that individuals check to see if their lives are still rich in "essential values" by making an "end-of-the-year balance sheet, and an estimated budget for the new year.

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Campaign brings joy of Christmas to troubled lives

By Lee Strong

Christmas 1987 was a little happier for many families, thanks to the Courier Journal/Catholic Charities Christmas Fund.

As of December 30, 1,573 contributors had donated \$64,601.35 to the fund. Through its various offices, the diocesan Division of Social Ministries used that money to provide gifts and food at Christmas for families throughout the diocese. In addition, monies not used during the holidays will support the services of these offices throughout the year.

"I think in general we've had the finest campaign that we've had thus far," said Maurice J. Tierney, diocesan associate director of Social Ministries for Catholic Charities. "The response has been good, though we're under last year's total at this time."

In fact, at this point in the 1986 campaign, the fund had received \$69,158.52 from 1,628 contributors. Tierney was at a loss to explain this year's decline, but noted that more money would probably come in. Last year, late contributions amounted to \$7,724.50. In addition, in 1986 the fund received a one-time donation of \$5,000 from an agency, helping to account

for some of the difference between the totals.

Tierney also noted that while the available funds had decreased, the demand for assistance has gone up this year. The Catholic Family Center, for example, dispersed 2,000 food vouchers during the holidays, as opposed to 1,800 at Christmas 1986.

Tierney has nothing but praise for the individuals who supported the fund, however.

"Their generosity is always pleasing," he said. "I always get a thrill seeing those envelopes come in, because I know they're going out to help poor families throughout the diocese."

Not all of the Christmas Fund contributions go directly through the diocesan Catholic Charities office, nor are they all financial. For example, Sister Gloria Ruocco, RSM, who coordinates emergency services for the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry (STOSM), received direct contributions of \$360 to be used at Christmas. The Catholic Family Center received offers of several coats for a woman who was without one. Several families also contacted the center about an elderly woman who'd asked to be allowed to spend Christmas with a family.

"We received offers from groups and people to help fill and distribute Christmas baskets," said Marcia Fedyk, the center's intake coordinator. "(At Christmas), we try to give everyone something, even if it isn't exactly what they needed. The Christmas program helps us to do that."

Anthony Barbaro, STOSM's executive director, agreed that the fund helps fill people's needs. "We use appeal money to help people with their day-to-day needs for food, transportation and health care," he noted. At Christmas, the office also coordinated the distribution of Christmas baskets from area parishes — the kind of assistance that doesn't appear on official appeal totals.

In addition, STOSM also provided more direct material assistance. The day before Christmas, for example, a family that had moved into a new apartment came in requesting assistance. They had food, but no stove to cook it on yet. They were given a hot plate.

"The Christmas Appeal helps out immensely," Sister Ruocco stated. "When you go to the individual houses, you see how much it does."