

World & Nation

Capsules

U.S. deacons hit a record

Washington (NC) — There were 8,443 permanent deacons in the United States as of last October 31, representing the highest number since the permanent diaconate program was reinstated after Vatican II, said a newly released report. The record-high count showed an increase of 605 from 1986.

The data were released January 19 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the new Annual Statistical Report prepared by the NCCB Secretariat for the Permanent Diaconate.

Order moves to oust nuns

Washington (NC) — The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have started the formal process toward dismissal of two nuns who have publicly supported abortion rights.

The nuns, Sisters Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey of Charleston, W. Va., who signed a 1984 New York Times advertisement saying that there is more than one legitimate Catholic position on abortion, could be ousted for disobeying superiors.

Vatican wants reports regularly

Vatican City (NC) — A new Vatican rule requires religious orders to submit detailed written reports on their status to the Holy See at least every six years, instead of forwarding the minutes of their general chapter meetings, as has been the case.

The aim is to keep the Vatican Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes updated on the activities of religious orders and "to promote fruitful dialogue," according to a letter sent to the orders by the head of the congregation, Cardinal Jean Jerome Hamer.

Drive nets few chaplains

Gary, Ind. (NC) — A drive by the head of recruiting for the U.S. Navy chaplain corps netted few responses from priests who could meet the eligibility requirements.

Father Eugene T. Gomulka, the head of recruiting, said January 20 that although he had many responses as a result of the September mailing, only two priests are being processed.

Some of the priests who were interested were beyond the Navy's age limit of 58. Others who were eligible had not received permission from their bishops or the superiors of their orders.

Seminary tensions assessed

Palm Beach, Fla. (NC) — Changes in the church and the style of priesthood underlie many of the tensions facing U.S. seminaries today, participants at a gathering of researchers, seminary leaders and foundation executives said.

Coadjutor Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy of Seattle, in a keynote speech opening the Jan. 21-22 meeting in Palm Beach, highlighted a growing need for priests to work effectively with lay ministers and to reconcile tensions in parishes.

"There has to be a convergence," he said, between the changing demands made of priests and the seminary training they receive.

Cardinal wants more from Ortega

Managua, Nicaragua — Managua Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo said political concessions made by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega were encouraging, but not enough.

Speaking after Sunday Mass in Managua January 17, the cardinal said "there is talk of democratization, but it has not yet happened."

"Some things are being done, but not everything," he said. "There is much further to go."

His remarks came after a January 16 meeting of Central American presidents in Costa Rica at which Ortega said he would suspend a state of emergency in Nicaragua and restore political and civil rights.

The government-imposed state of emergency was first decreed in 1982.

Ortega said he would issue a limited amnesty for prisoners and open direct cease-fire talks with the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, or contras.

He made the concessions three weeks before the U.S. Congress was to vote on new aid for the contras.

Despite the concessions, the Reagan administration said it will ask Congress for more aid for the contras, but three senior House Democrats said January 19 that further U.S. aid to the rebels would end the Central American peace process.

The meeting in Costa Rica was to discuss compliance with the Central American peace plan, first proposed by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias and signed by the five Central American presidents in Guatemala last August.

Prior to the January 16 meeting, critics had said Ortega had not done enough to comply with the peace accord.

Alberto Carballo, a spokesman for Radio Catolica, a radio station operated by the Archdiocese of Managua, said in a January



Presidents of five Central American nations gather in Alajuela, Costa Rica, for the opening of a summit meeting. From left are Jose Azcona of Honduras, Jose Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador, Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, Vinicio Cerezo of Guatemala and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua.

19 telephone interview that Cardinal Obando Bravo had agreed after the talks in Costa Rica to "continue interceding — with all good will — in discussions between the two sides in hopes there will be a cease-fire."

He said Cardinal Obando Bravo was to be out of Nicaragua the entire week of January 18 for "pastoral reasons," but added that the cardinal had asked Managua Auxiliary Bishop Bosco Vivas Robelo, Father Ariel Ortega and Monsignor Carlos Sancti to act on his behalf in discussions between representatives of the contras and the Sandinista government "if the opportunity presents itself."

Carballo said lifting the state of emergency gives Radio Catolica "more liberty, and yes, more hope."

Radio Catolica was shut down by the

Nicaraguan government in 1986 for failing to comply with a Nicaraguan communications rule requiring radio stations to broadcast Ortega's New Year's message. It was allowed to resume broadcasting in September.

Lifting the state of emergency, he said, will mean "that the rights guaranteed in the political constitution will be reinstated, that there will be freedom of assembly and freedom of expression."

Carballo said part of the government's task in lifting the state of emergency will be teaching Nicaraguans what their rights are.

Carballo is the brother of Monsignor Bismarck Carballo, the director of Radio Catolica and head of communications for the Archdiocese of Managua whom Ortega exiled from Nicaragua in 1986. He was allowed to return last September.

Pope will meet with Nicaraguan president

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II is scheduled to meet with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega at the Vatican at the same time Ortega's fellow countryman, Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo of Managua — who is promoting peace talks in Nicaragua's civil war — will be visiting Italy.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said January 25 the meeting is to take place on the morning of January 29. It will be the pope's first Vatican meeting with the Sandinista leader.

No information was available on whether Cardinal Obando Bravo would be involved in the discussion or whether he would meet with the pope during his Italian journey. The Nicaraguan churchman was scheduled to be in Italy January 30 for celebrations for the founding of the Salesian order, of which he is a member.

Nora Habed Sarra, first secretary of the Nicaraguan Embassy to the Holy See, said the pope's meeting with Ortega was "a continuation of a new type of relations based on dialogue, mediation, reconciliation."

Asked what effect the meeting could have on the Central American peace process, she said: "The Vatican has always been a great moral authority and has always carried out a role of dialogue for peace, and we expect the Vatican to continue along this path."

On January 25, Pope John Paul met with Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas of San Salvador, El Salvador. No details of their discussion were made available.

El Salvador, with its prolonged civil war, and Nicaragua are prime subjects of a five-nation Central American peace plan designed to restore stability and promote democracy in the region.

The last meeting between the pope and Ortega came during a troubled papal visit to Nicaragua in 1983 when demonstrators disrupted a papal Mass and the pope rebuked a priest serving as a government official.

Since that visit, Nicaraguan church-state relations have had difficult periods characterized by mutual charges of disservice to the country. Tensions were fueled by the expulsions of the Managua archdiocesan director of communications, Monsignor Bismarck Carballo, and Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega of the Prelature of Juigalpa in

1986.

The churchmen were subsequently granted permission to return, but Bishop Vega declined.

Pope John Paul's representative in Nicaragua, Archbishop Paolo Giglio, has been credited with helping make church-state relations less contentious.

Cardinal Obando Bravo is deeply involved in efforts to arrange peace talks, mandated by a Central American peace plan, between Nicaragua's government and its opponents in the Nicaraguan Resistance. He has consulted frequently with Ortega.

On January 16 the Nicaraguan government suspended its state of emergency and agreed to hold direct talks with "contra" representatives.

Masses suspended in Haitian election protest

Toronto (NC) — Catholic parishes in Haiti protested the January 17 presidential elections by suspending Mass for the day, and a coalition of Haitians — including Religious — has vowed to reject the election results.

Radio Soleil, the Catholic-run station forced off the air just before Haiti's aborted November election, protested this election by refusing to broadcast information about it.

"No one, the Catholic Church included, accepted this masquerade as a real election," said Paul Dejean, a Canadian aid worker and human rights activist working in Haiti. "Priests, bishops and most of the people went to church Saturday afternoon instead (of Sunday)."

An estimated 10 percent of the country's citizens voted in the election. Leslie Manigat, a former political science professor regarded as the military's candidate, was expected to win — but may be unable to wield much power.

The Church had previously called on citizens to boycott the election, he said. Dejean would not say which church members organized the suspension of Mass or encouraged the boycott, but said it was a collective effort among Catholics to protest "a farce of an election" and to keep people indoors and away from possible violence.

More than 300 of Haiti's 325 Catholic parishes participated in the boycott.

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