

World & Nation

Capsules

USCC supports federal rules

Washington (NC) — The U.S. Catholic Conference has urged a federal appeals court to uphold regulations of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that forbid agencies participating in a federal family-planning program from providing abortion counseling and referral. In a friend-of-the-court brief, the USCC claimed that these rules provide "important restrictions on the promotion of abortion," and that a lower court decision to ban their implementation should be reversed.

Cuomo's right, priest says

New York (NC) — New York Governor Mario Cuomo was right in drawing a distinction between moral principles and their political application, said Father Richard P. McBrien, chairman of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame, during a May 5 speech. Father McBrien also warned against Church officials engaging in single-issue politics and said he hopes the nation's Catholic bishops will avoid any appearance of political partisanship during the 1988 presidential campaign.

Prefect urges curb on science

Vatican City (NC) — Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Vatican's top doctrinal official, told a bioethics congress April 30 that reducing humanity to a series of problems to be solved in the laboratory would mean the end of human freedom. The cardinal criticized efforts "in the name of progress and freedom" to make technical feasibility the "only law of science" and called for a "new synthesis between science and freedom." Last year the cardinal's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith rejected in-vitro fertilizations as morally illicit.

Officials headed for Moscow

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II has named a high-level Vatican delegation headed by Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli to attend ceremonies in Moscow this June marking the millennium of Christianity in what is now the Soviet Union. The pope's action underscored his "hope that these celebrations can be the dawn of a new day in the history of the Church of Christ," a Vatican statement said.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian leader Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky has observed that some Ukrainians are interpreting the pope's call for ecumenical discussions between Ukrainian Catholics and leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church as papal approval of Soviet repression of their church.

Draft's unrealistic, team finds

Bangkok, Thailand (NC) — The Asian bishops' top theological advisers have recommended rejecting the Vatican's draft statement on the authority of episcopal conferences, saying the document is unrealistic and lacking in its presentation of Church structure. "The bishops would be justified in responding that this text, as it now stands, should not be used as a basis on which to continue the study of the status of episcopal conferences," the advisers said in a seven-page statement released in mid-April.

Group plans Rome meetings

Washington (NC) — A small group of conservative U.S. Catholic and Lutheran intellectuals plans to visit Rome in June to discuss with Vatican officials the development of Catholic social teaching. The group consists of Catholics Michael Novak and George Weigel, and Lutherans Peter L. Berger and the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus.

Novak has been critical of the U.S. bishops' peace and economics pastorals, and has taken issue with Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical "On Social Concerns." Weigel has argued that the bishops' peace pastoral abandons classical Catholic theological thought on war and peace.

Pope suggests bishops 'reflect' on statement

By Agostino Bono
Uruguay (NC) — Pope John Paul II said during an in-flight press conference May 7 that the U.S. bishops should "reflect" on their controversial AIDS policy statement to "find their own expression for that which is in accord with the universal doctrine of the Church."

But the pope added that he will not dictate what they should say on the topic.

"I am not a dictator. I am the successor of Peter," he said when asked if the U.S. bishops should change their controversial statement, issued in December.

At the same time, "they should reflect" on the issue, he told journalists during a press conference on his way to Uruguay.

"The American bishops know what the doctrine of the Church in this area is. And they should find their own expression for that which is in accord with the universal doctrine of the Church," the pope said.

The bishops were already scheduled to discuss the statement at their June meeting in Collegetown, Minn., along with other issues.

In St. Louis, Archbishop John L. May, president of the U.S. bishops' conference,

said May 9 he thought the pope's comments would make the bishops reflect on the statement "more fully."

Archbishop May said he believes Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had discussed the statement with the Texas bishops during their "ad limina" visits, but "he did not ask for any changes that I know of."

The statement, issued by the 50-member administrative board, said the bishops would not oppose factual information about condoms in public AIDS-prevention programs that contained a "moral vision." It said abstinence outside marriage and fidelity in a marriage are the only "morally correct and medically sure ways to prevent the spread of AIDS."

The condom section of the statement was criticized by some prominent U.S. bishops who said they would not have voted for it. The section can be perceived as going against Church teachings that all artificial means of contraception are immoral, argued the critics.

Cardinal Ratzinger said earlier this year

that his agency, responsible for monitoring theological orthodoxy, was studying the statement.

The cardinal also said he would discuss the document with U.S. bishops during their "ad limina" visits to the Vatican during the year. The visits are required every five years so bishops can report on the status of their dioceses.

Vatican officials have said privately that the U.S. statement caused Vatican displeasure but that it was up to the U.S. bishops, not the Vatican, to take corrective measures.

AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, erodes the body's ability to defend itself against diseases, causing death. The AIDS virus is most commonly transmitted through sexual activity and blood transfusions. The disease has reached epidemic proportions in the United States among sexually active homosexuals.

It is also prevalent among drug users who share used needles.

AIDS can also be transmitted through heterosexual activity.

Missionary ties attack to Honduran identity crisis

By Mike Tangeman
Tegucigalpa, Honduras (NC) — The mob of Hondurans who last month set fire to the U.S. Embassy compound in Tegucigalpa reflected a feeling that Honduras' national identity is being sacrificed to U.S. interests in Central America, according to a U.S. missionary.

"I think you have to look at the overall situation of the 'contras,' (and) the military presence of the United States," said Passionist Father Joseph A. Fahy, 59, who arrived in Honduras last October. "The feeling among some very sensitive Hondurans is that they're no longer in control of their own national affairs or decisions in the country, (that) they're dictated to by others, specifically Americans."

Following the April 5 capture and extradition to the United States of alleged drug trafficker Juan Ramon Matta, an angry group of demonstrators broke into and set fire to the U.S. consulate and part of the embassy here.

Observers said the demonstrators' anger

was not linked to Matta's alleged drug connections, but was over the violation to a provision of the country's Constitution which prohibits the extradition of Honduran citizens under any circumstances.

They said resentment over a series of alleged constitutional violations by the government of President Jose Azcona in recent months — including the recent deployment of U.S. Marines without the consent of the Honduran Congress — converted the Matta case into the straw that broke the camel's back.

The government has blamed students from the National Autonomous University of Honduras and the national teachers' college for the embassy incident. Two students were killed during the protest by gunfire which U.S. Embassy spokesmen said did not come from inside the embassy compound.

Father Fahy, who as part of his pastoral work in Honduras celebrates a weekly Mass at the university campus and works with students there, said many are concerned about "a loss of their own national identity,

a historical awareness of their country."

He said university students are a privileged group in Honduras, where less than 1 percent of the population of 4.4 million has access to a college education. Some students are indifferent to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment which plague the country, he said. "But the ones I've talked with who share these concerns are committed Christians, very deeply religious people," Father Fahy said. "Their faith does color very much their sense of justice and their desire to alleviate the situation of the immense majority of their fellow countrymen."

In addition to his university work, Father Fahy travels to outlying villages to celebrate Mass on weekends.

His half-hour radio program, called "The Footsteps of the Good Shepherd," is also broadcast weekly over the radio station of the Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa, Radio Catolica.

Before coming to Honduras, Father Fahy worked for nearly 25 years with Hispanics in New Jersey and Florida, and with Cuban refugees in Georgia.

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