

World & Nation

Document outlines programs to use on 'priestless Sundays'

By Agostino Bono
Vatican City (NC) — Bishops with too few priests to celebrate the necessary Sunday Masses should develop programs by which deacons or appointed lay people lead Sunday prayer services, according to a new Vatican document.

The preferred service is a Liturgy of the Word followed by distribution of Communion with previously consecrated hosts, says the document, prepared by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship.

The phenomenon of parishes and church centers without a priest to celebrate Sunday Mass is worldwide and affects mission countries as well as developed countries, said Monsignor Pere Tena, undersecretary of the congregation, at a June 30 Vatican press conference. The document, issued in Italian, was dated June 2.

Monsignor Tena said the directory was prepared at the request of numerous bishops' conferences asking for guidelines in the preparation of their programs.

It codifies programs already in existence in many countries. In the United States the situation is known as "priestless Sundays."

The 18-page directory gives local bishops or bishops' conferences the power to determine whether in their jurisdictions the priest shortage is leaving church communities without Sunday Masses for long periods of time. It also leaves it to the bishops to determine whether the distance to the nearest

Sunday Mass is too great for their priestless parishes and church centers.

The local bishop is also authorized to appoint and train lay people as acolytes, readers and special ministers of the Eucharist to aid deacons or to conduct services if no deacon is available.

Under the Vatican rules, lay people are not authorized to preach a homily. However, they can read homilies prepared by priests, the directory says.

People attending the service must be made aware that the Mass is still the primary Church liturgical ceremony and that they should make every effort to attend Sunday Masses, the directory says.

To avoid confusion between prayer services and the Mass, "there can be no insertion in the celebration of that which is proper to the Mass, above all the presentation of gifts and of the eucharistic hosts," it says.

The laity must be aware that the hosts distributed were consecrated by a priest during a Mass, it adds.

The Liturgy of the Word should use prayers and Bible readings from the corresponding Sunday Mass, it says. Bishops may substitute other Church-approved prayer services such as vespers and have the power to make modifications in prayer services, but this should be kept to a minimum, the directory says.

Dignity Mass loses church sponsorship

Washington (NC) — The Archdiocese of Seattle announced June 30 that in response to a "challenge" from the Vatican, it would begin a ministry to the homosexual community and would remove sponsorship of a weekly Mass from the local Dignity chapter.

The archdiocese's action is similar to the position taken by Chicago Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin, who announced in May that a Dignity Mass at St. Sebastian Parish would continue only under archdiocesan sponsorship. Two-thirds of the Chicago chapter's members have decided to hold an alternate Mass at a local Lutheran church.

The national president of Dignity said that almost two dozen U.S. bishops have discontinued Dignity-sponsored Masses in their dioceses since October, 1986, when Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a letter on "the pastoral care of homosexual persons."

The letter said it was improper to allow church buildings to be used by groups, such as Dignity, that oppose church teaching.

James Bussen, national president, said that about 15 Dignity chapters still sponsor Masses in buildings owned by the Church.

Pope calls for liberty

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II called for religious liberty for Ukrainian Catholics and religious unity with the Orthodox Church during a weekend of celebrations marking the 1,000th anniversary of the baptism of the Kievan-Russ.

During a liturgical celebration of the anniversary in St. Peter's Basilica July 10, the pope said the Holy See has always tried to "support Ukrainian Catholic believers in their right to remain in Catholic unity and to keep themselves faithful to their own rite and their own traditions."

But the pope also told 6,000 Ukrainian Catholics from around the world attending the liturgy that the Holy Spirit "induces us to desire ardently that which is now near, the day of the kiss of peace between the Catholic and Orthodox churches."

Court upholds regulations

Washington (NC) — A federal district court in New York has upheld the Reagan administration's regulations removing abortion-related services from the federal Title X family planning program.

In his decision, U.S. District Judge Louis L. Stanton found that the regulations' ban on abortion referrals and counseling did not violate free-speech rights. His ruling July 1 overturned his earlier, temporary injunction against implementation of the regulations in New York state.

"The regulations do not prohibit or compel speech," Stanton said. "They grant money to support one view and not another, but that is quite different from infringing on free speech."

Capsules

Pro-lifers seek aid for jailed activist

Washington (NC) — A pro-life group has called on the U.S. Justice Department and President Reagan to investigate what it alleges are gross violations of the civil rights of jailed Catholic anti-abortion activist Joan Andrews.

At a press conference June 30, Judie Brown, president of American Life League, said Miss Andrews, who is serving a five-year sentence in a Florida prison for civil disobedience at an abortion clinic, has been reportedly strip-searched for no reason, subjected to "cruel and inhumane treatment" and not been allowed visitors.

A prison official said such a search of Andrews was "standard procedure" and that her solitary confinement and restriction on visitors was the result of her refusal to obey prison authorities.

Brown released copies of letters her organization sent to President Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese calling for "a full-fledged investigation."

"We suspect her civil rights have been grossly violated," Brown said.

Andrews is serving the third year of a five-year sentence. She was sentenced in September 1986 for burglary, criminal mischief and resisting a police officer without violence. She was charged after her arrest at a Pensacola abortion clinic where she tried to disable a suction machine used in abortions.

She has served almost 29 days out of every 30-day period of her sentence in solitary confinement for her refusal to cooperate with prison officials.

Author in 'agony' over book

St. Louis (NC) — A priest whose book disputes claims that Mary has appeared to six young people in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, said its publication has brought him rejection and severe criticism.

"I am going through agony," said Franciscan Father Ivo Sivric, a native of Medjugorje who lives in St. Louis. "Even some priests are calling me all sorts of names. I'm getting calls every day" from people who believe the apparitions are real.

"To make your doubts known is dangerous. They will call you an atheist and you will be ostracized," Father Sivric said. Now that the book is out, "I don't think I would dare go there," he added.

The book, "La Face Cachée de Medjugorje" ("The Hidden Face of Medjugorje"), was published in conjunction with a psychological study of Medjugorje to be released this fall.

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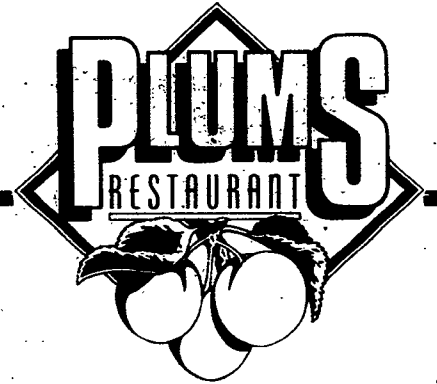
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