

World & Nation

# Democrats convene amid prayers, protests

By Liz Schevtchuk

Washington (NC) — Prayers, participatory democracy and protests highlighted the July 18-21 Democratic National Convention, which drew nearly 4,200 delegates to Atlanta, Ga.

Selecting Massachusetts Gov. Michael S. Dukakis as the party's presidential candidate and U.S. Sen. Lloyd M. Bentsen of Texas as the vice-presidential contender, Democrats also adopted a party platform that endorses "reproductive choice," nuclear weapons reductions and such programs as day care, job training, assistance to small farms and better education.

Convention participants won the attention of local church leaders, including Archbishop Eugene A. Marino of Atlanta, who opened and closed the convention by leading prayers for the party, its nominees and delegates.

At a Mass for convention participants July 17 at Sacred Heart Church in Atlanta, Archbishop Marino asked God's blessing on delegates, and assured the 500 people attending the Mass that the Church of Atlanta would be praying that their work would be effective.

The next day, some 100 convention participants attended an ecumenical service to hear Archbishop Marino and other local clergy pray for the continued success of American democracy.

The United States, despite its problems, "is the world's last best hope — and we ought to export it to other people by our convictions," the archbishop told National Catholic News Service after the interfaith prayer service in the Martin Luther King Jr. Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

The nomination of Dukakis July 20 gave the Democrats a standard-bearer who disdains both the death penalty and abortion restrictions, rejects aid to Nicaraguan rebels, and wants to replace the Strategic Defense Initiative with better-trained conventional forces.

A Greek Orthodox, the 54-year-old Dukakis favors more government involvement in such family-related issues as day care, education and refugee assistance. He has won praise for Massachusetts initiatives in housing, welfare reform and health care that are viewed as national models.

On July 21 the party nominated Bentsen and heard Dukakis deliver his acceptance speech, which saluted citizens who have enriched and ennobled America with their unselfish work. Among those mentioned was a Denver priest, Capuchin Father William Kraus, director of Samaritan House, a 250-bed shelter.

Some Catholic delegates were nevertheless unhappy with the platform.

Angry about nomination of a "pro-abortion" presidential candidate, pro-life delegates cast three protest votes July 20 for a pro-life Idaho congressman.

The three delegates, all from Minnesota, voted for the nomination of Rep. Richard Stallings of Idaho, who, according to dele-



UPI/NC News

Democratic presidential nominee Michael S. Dukakis accepts the accolades of delegates following his July 21 acceptance speech.

gate Jackie Schwietz, "is a 100 percent pro-lifer."

Outside the convention hall, an "Operation Rescue" protest at an Atlanta abortion clinic July 19 resulted in the arrest of 134 anti-abortion protesters. The protesters were arrested at Atlanta SurgiCenter, more than a mile from the Omni Hotel, the convention site.

Other anti-abortion leaders said July 20 that the Democratic Party's abortion position so alienates Americans that it undermines the party's chance of winning the presidency.

Dr. John C. Willke, National Right-to-Life Committee president, denounced the Democratic ticket as "the most pro-abortion presidential ticket in history."

A day later in Arlington, Va., just outside Washington, the National Right-to-Life Political Action Committee officially endorsed

the Republican presidential candidate, Vice President George Bush.

However, numerous Catholic delegates interviewed by National Catholic News Service before and during the convention suggested that the party's abortion position, while troubling, is not enough to drive them from party involvement.

"If we step out of the party, we'll never have any influence," said Evelyn J. Aquila, pro-life director of the Brooklyn Diocese and first vice chairwoman of the New York State Democratic Committee.

"I believe someday the Democratic Party will have a total commitment to life, not 95 percent, but 100 percent," she said. "And I pray for that and work for that."

Contributing to this story were Stephenie Overman in Washington and Gretchen Keiser and Rita McInerney in Atlanta.

## Democrats, bishops agree on many platform issues

By Liz Schevtchuk

Atlanta (NC) — Their platforms differ strongly on abortion, but when it comes to domestic and foreign policy, the Democratic Party platform and the U.S. bishops often express common goals.

The platform adopted in Atlanta during the July 18-21 Democratic National Convention and the bishops' platform — not really a platform, but testimony given this year to the Democratic and Republican platform committees — generally converge on such issues as arms control, employment, agricultural policy, health care, housing, human rights and Central America.

"Today, as both believers and citizens, we urge this great political party to shape its platform first and foremost by how it touches each human person," said the bishops' platform testimony prepared by the U.S. Catholic Conference, the bishops' public policy arm.

"We especially ask you to fashion a platform which respects the life, enhances the dignity and protects the rights of all our sisters and brothers, especially the poor and most vulnerable," the USCC said.

In the area of sharpest disagreement, the USCC testimony asserted that the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion "must be reversed."

It added that "unless there is action by the Supreme Court, restoration of legal protection for the lives of the unborn will require an amendment to the Constitution. We specifically urge the platform committee to support such an amendment."

The platform committee did no such thing. But it dropped a 1984 party plank that

included a lengthy statement backing abortion and opposing a constitutional amendment.

Agreement between the bishops and the party was more evident in their support for the new U.S.-Soviet Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty.

The Democrats called for "maintaining a stable nuclear deterrent sufficient to counter any Soviet threat." But they also sought "mutual, verifiable and enforceable agreements that will make significant reductions in strategic weapons in a way that diminishes the risk of nuclear attack by either superpower."

The party also urged a ban on chemical and space weapons and a halt in all nuclear weapons testing.

Similarly, the USCC recommended "mutual, verifiable arms control measures that make deep cuts in strategic weapons ... that ban all testing of nuclear weapons, that outlaw chemical weapons, and that reduce conventional forces."

Both the Church and the Democrats championed economic justice and efforts to fight unemployment, recommending public-private partnerships, fair wages, day care for working families, backing for the right of workers to form unions, and job training.

The Democrats and USCC also criticized hunger and homelessness in America.

"Hunger is a growing national scandal that this nation should not tolerate. Everyone has a right to a sufficient amount of food to live his or her life in dignity," the USCC said.

The Democrats said they believe "that no

person should go to bed hungry and that we must renew the fight against hunger at home and abroad."

To fight homelessness and lack of adequate housing, the USCC proposed steps to preserve existing housing and increase supplies of quality housing for low-income people.

"Decent housing is a basic human right," said the USCC.

Farm families also generated concern among both the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party.

The party called for an agricultural system consisting of "hundreds of thousands of family farmers" assisted by "supply management, reasonable price supports ... and revitalization of rural America."

The USCC supported "an agricultural system based on small- and moderate-sized family-owned and -operated farms," backed by price support, supply management and rural development programs.

Church and party officials also agreed on the need for peaceful resolution of conflicts in Central America and elsewhere.

"The Central American peace plan" drafted by the leaders of the nations in that region "is the most helpful development in years and requires every possible support," the USCC testimony declared. "We favor a continual and significant reduction in U.S. military aid to Central America," the USCC added.

According to the Democrats, the United States "should provide new leadership to deliver the promise of peace and security through negotiations" in Central America and other troubled regions.

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