

World and Nation



A Tadjik woman views the ruins of what was once her home in this hillside Central Asian village, devastated Monday, Jan. 23, by an earthquake and landslide.

Friendship theme predicted for pastoral's second draft

WINTER PARK, Fla. (NC) — The second draft of a U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on women will look "significantly different" from the first draft, said Susan Muto, the drafting committee's staff writer.

"You can't rush a flower to bloom," said Muto, a professor and director of the Institute of Formative Spirituality at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

The drafting committee, led by Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet, Ill., began work on the second draft during an early January meeting in Winter Park.

There is "no way in the world" that the second draft will be finished this year, said Bishop Imesch. He had said, when he presented the first draft of the letter last April, that the committee hoped to have the second and final draft ready for the U.S. bishops' November 1989 general meeting.

Titled "Partners in the Mystery of Redemption," the letter's first draft called sexism a sin against human dignity, asked that all church roles not requiring priestly ordination be opened to women, urged an end to the economic inequities women suffer, and said that men need to be more responsible in marriage and family relationships.

Several groups have criticized the style of the draft — alternating quotes selected from papers submitted during a consultation period with commentary from the bishops — as lacking depth and intellectual rigor.

The planned second draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on women will issue "a new call to solidarity" among women and men, said Sister Sara Butler, a consultant to the drafting committee.

"We're going to have a different format and do away with the 'voices,'" she said, referring to the quote format.

Sister Butler spoke about the changes during a Jan. 24-26 meeting in Elkins Park on "women's concerns and the local church" sponsored by the U.S. bishops' Committee on Women in Society and in the Church.

"We will try to draw the theme of friendship through the letter," she said, using it as the basic model for relationships. The image of friendship may work better than partnership, Sister Butler said, because it doesn't imply marriage.

riage.

The second draft also will begin with a more systematic approach to Christian anthropology, she said.

The task, Sister Butler said, is "how to define personhood and how can we explain the equivalence of men and women while affirming their differences."

As Pope John Paul II wrote in his 1988 apostolic letter on the dignity of women, Christian anthropologies see men and women "equal as persons," but also see relationships as essential to personhood, Sister Butler said.

In both the pope's letter and the bishops' first draft, she said, there is "a strong affirmation that women are equal in dignity and equal in rights, equal as persons and equal as created in the image of God."

"What is rejected is the idea that there is a hierarchical relationship between the sexes, with men having the more responsible and respected roles and women relegated to less important, less valuable roles," she said.

Changes planned for the second draft of the pastoral, including an explanation of Christian anthropology similar to the pope's, caused some of the conference participants to question whether the U.S. bishops would pay more attention to Pope John Paul II's letter than to the consultation documents sent in by the dioceses.

Although Sister Butler said that was not the case, conference participants voted unanimously to ask the bishops' committee for another round of consultations before final passage of a U.S. pastoral letter.

Sister Butler said the committee had not made a decision on further consultations. When the first draft was issued, committee chairman Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet, Ill., had said the second draft was expected to be the final draft.

Some people have misconceptions about the pastoral, said Bishop Thomas J. Grady of Orlando, a committee member.

The drafting committee cannot "collect all this information, sort out the problems and write a letter that will solve all the issues raised," he said. "The letter is not going to be the final word on any of this. We try to make recommendations based upon our observations, based upon our history of the church."

Lawyers cling to First Amendment in Fr. Curran's suit against CUA

By Jerry Filteau

WASHINGTON (NC) — In their final arguments to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, lawyers on both sides of Father Charles E. Curran's lawsuit against The Catholic University of America pleaded First Amendment constitutional protections.

In written post-trial briefs:

- University attorneys warned that the university's religious freedom under the First Amendment's "free exercise" clause would be violated if the court forces it to give teaching assignments to Father Curran, a moral theologian who has been declared ineligible to teach Catholic theology by the church's highest authorities.

- Father Curran's attorneys warned that if the court does not enforce Father Curran's claim of a contractual right to teach in deference to the university's claims of religious conviction, such a decision would violate the First Amendment's "establishment" clause by let-

ting religious institutions break civil contracts with impunity if they claim religious reasons.

The written briefs filed Jan. 25 by the attorneys for the university and Father Curran marked the final phase of argument before Superior Court Judge Frederick H. Weisberg in the priest's violation-of-contract lawsuit against Catholic University.

At the end of the actual trial, which was conducted in D.C. Superior Court Dec. 14-23, Weisberg ordered both sides to present their final arguments in written form the following month.

In their final statements the university lawyers argued that the institution's contract with Father Curran did not guarantee him an unconditional right to teach.

The century-old special relationship of the university to the Holy See had always been an integral part of any contractual agreement between the university and its theology teachers, they said.

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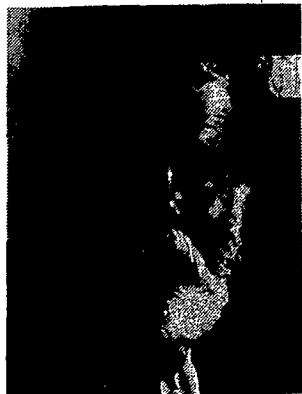
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