

## Religious

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U.S. bishops addressed a number of tensions facing men and women religious today. These included tensions over the relationship between community life and apostolates, especially in orders founded for apostolic purposes, and over different approaches to authority and government in orders.

The pope said that "some of the tensions cited ... can be dispelled by a clear and unambiguous theology of the church."

He urged the bishops to "promote a clear understanding" of the relationship

between religious and the local bishop and the role of religious in the local church by meeting regularly with religious superiors in their dioceses for "a more effective and coordinated planning for mission."

He especially urged attention to the community life of religious. "Community life is at the heart of religious life; it is a distinguishing feature of this type of consecrated life," he wrote. "Religious life is vowed life lived in community. Religious are called to be an exemplary community within the community of the church. ... The holiness of religious is inexorably bound to the full living of their community life."

He said he shared a concern of bishops

about "a growing secularization in religious life."

"Religious are not merely professional persons who assist in the work of the church," he said. "They are at the heart of the mystery of the church; they belong inseparably to her life and holiness. They are called to a radical living of the baptismal commitment common to all."

The pope described religious as "called to be a sign of contradiction, a witness of counterculture in a world which so often seeks self-gratification and fulfillment, which alienates the poor and the powerless,

which is intolerant and hostile to minorities, which is noisy and strident and frenetic."

In such a world, he said, the consecrated religious commitments to poverty, chastity, obedience, community life and closeness to God "offer a viable and feasible alternative to what is and speak the promise of what is to be."

He urged bishops to "encourage and exhort them as they strive to live what they profess; like us they bear the weaknesses of the flawed human condition."

## Buffalo diocese begins process for Father Baker's canonization

BUFFALO, N.Y. (NC) — Buffalo Bishop Edward D. Head has appointed a tribunal to start the canonization process for Monsignor Nelson H. Baker, a priest who founded several institutions to care for the poor.

The tribunal will start looking into the sanctity of Monsignor Baker by hearing testimony from people who knew him or heard anecdotes about him secondhand from reliable eyewitnesses. Also, Monsignor Baker's published letters and writings will be reviewed, and a historical and critical biography on his life is planned.

Monsignor Baker served for 54 years as pastor of Our Lady of Victory Parish in Lackawanna, N.Y., until his death on July 29, 1936, at the age of 94.

Over the years, Monsignor Baker operated soup kitchens and founded homes for unwed mothers, homeless boys, and abandoned infants, as well as Our Lady of Victory Hospital — all near Lackawanna.

Several members of the parish and Buf-

falo diocese approached Bishop Head with the idea of pursuing the cause for sainthood for the priest, and in October, 1987, the Vatican's Congregation for Sainthood Causes gave permission to Bishop Head to start the process.

Monsignor Baker was born Feb. 16, 1842, in Buffalo. He served as a soldier in the Civil War, and was a businessman before being ordained in 1876 for the Buffalo diocese. From 1881-1882, he also served as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in Corning, which was then included in the Buffalo diocese and later incorporated into the Diocese of Rochester.

A major criterion bishops use in deciding to push for the cause of sainthood is whether a person had a reputation for holiness among the faithful and is considered a subject of prayer. If so, and if more than five years have passed since the person's death, the bishop can begin collecting eyewitness testimony and documentation — pro and con — needed to compile a detailed and accurate life record.

The information gathered on Monsignor Baker will eventually be turned over to the Vatican, where a study of the priest's sanctity will be conducted.



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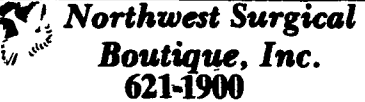
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