

# Bishop calls cardinal's view of catechesis 'devastating'

By Julie Sly  
NC News

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's recent criticisms of the state of catechesis in the United States are "devastating," Bishop Raymond A. Lucker of New Ulm, Minn., told religious educators April 3.

"I believed that we were in the midst of catechetical renewal," Bishop Lucker told about 400 members of the National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education at their convention April 2-6.

Bishop Lucker, episcopal moderator for the organization, referred to remarks by Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and by Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York during the March 8-11 meeting between U.S. bishops and Vatican officials. If what the two cardinals said was true, Bishop Lucker said, then there has not been a catechetical renewal and the church would have to go back in time.

In addressing the teaching role of bishops, Cardinal Ratzinger said that since the Second Vatican Council religious education "has been turned over to the so-called professional," resulting in "a confusion of voices, making it all the more difficult to recognize that of the Gospel."

Cardinal O'Connor said that some "years of confusion and diversity" in catechetical instruction materials used in Catholic schools and religious education programs "have left an entire generation in a state of ambiguity."

In the 1950s, a catechetical renewal which began in the United States and was

spurred on by Vatican II emphasized teaching accurate doctrine "to call forth a response to faith," as well as adult catechesis and formation, Bishop Lucker said. "If it is not true, then we have an enormous communications problem with our own bishops and with many other people who would probably agree with their assessments," he continued. "Or if the renewal as we understand it is misunderstood, then we have a great deal of explaining to do."

The Minnesota prelate identified as one of the major problems facing the U.S. Catholic Church the need for an ongoing conversion of adults such as "cultural Catholics" who are alienated or who may be registered at parishes, but whose faith "doesn't affect their daily lives."

The bishop also expressed concern about the new profession of faith and oath of fidelity issued recently by the Vatican.

Among those who must take the new profession and oath are all candidates for the diaconate and persons receiving new assignments as pastors or as teachers of philosophy or theology in all Catholic seminaries and universities. "I don't like the attitude underlying it," Bishop Lucker said of the oath. "The implication is that you have to have someone take an oath because you're not quite sure that they are true, orthodox or faithful."

"I look at U.S. religious educators and there isn't a more loyal, faithful and committed group," he said. "When you do something like this it's almost a last-ditch effort. ... You see that the ship is sinking and somehow you've got to demand that people do something."



AP/Wide World Photos  
Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Cuban President Fidel Castro sign a treaty of friendship and cooperation at the conclusion of their summit talks in Havana Tuesday. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, second from left, is among the witnesses.

## CUA students won't appeal loss

WASHINGTON — Five Catholic University of America theology students said April 6 that they would not appeal a court dismissal of the lawsuit they filed against the university over its removal of Father Charles E. Curran from his teaching post in moral theology.

The students' suit, which claimed that the university violated its contract with them when it removed Father Curran, was summarily dismissed April 4 by Judge Frederick H. Weisberg of the District of Columbia Superior Court.

Weisberg, who ruled in February that the university had not violated Father Cur-

ran's contract, said the students who had expected to study moral theology under the priest "got caught in the middle" of his dispute with the university and were "the ultimate losers" in the case.

The five students — Julia Fleming, Kevin Forrester, Rose Gorman, Frederick Hayes and Johann Klodzen — filed a companion suit in 1987 after Father Curran sued the university for allegedly violating his contract by suspending him from teaching.

After Weisberg ruled that the university acted within its rights in removing Father Curran from teaching theology, the university asked for summary dismissal of the students' case.

In his April 4 ruling granting the university's motion, Weisberg said the students' legal claims were so closely tied to Father Curran's that their case fell when he lost his.

"No student has a right to assume that available faculty will remain static or that the quality of an academic program will not improve or decline as faculty come and go," he said.

## Court

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sonhood," the brief maintained. "The teaching of Aquinas and others, and the scientific evidence regarding fetal development, provide 'good and solid' reasons for believing that the early embryo is not ensouled and thus not a person."

"Aquinas held that 'the human soul was infused into the body only when the latter began to show a human shape,'" said the brief.

Therefore, for some "serious Catholic believers, the embryo is certainly not a person during the early stages of pregnancy and that consequently it is not immoral to terminate pregnancy during this time provided there are serious reasons" for doing so, said the brief.

But the NCCB's Doerflinger said that "the old theories ... proposing that a human soul is infused at some intermediate stage of fetal development were never official church doctrine and were based on biological ideas of the fourth century B.C. which were exploded over a century ago."

He also said that when the brief "argues that a finding of 'personhood' for the unborn would violate the First Amendment's religion clauses" it "ignores several facts."

He said the Missouri law "does not rely on the concept of 'personhood' but finds that the life of a human being begins at conception." Beyond that, he said, "neither Missouri nor any other state demands proof that a human being has an immortal soul before recognizing him or her as a 'person' in other contexts."

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