

Bishops tackle major issues during general meeting

BALTIMORE (CNS) — Before adjourning their general meeting Nov. 9, U.S. bishops called for foreign forces to leave Lebanon, endorsed chastity rather than "safe sex" as a means of fighting AIDS, and unanimously approved a pastoral plan written by and for black Catholics.

Earlier in their meeting, held in Baltimore to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the first U.S. diocese and bishop, the prelates reaffirmed the sacredness of life, stating that the unborn should be protected constitutionally and that all Catholics, including politicians, should reject "pro-choice" stances on abortion.

At the end of the meeting, Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati began his three-year term as president of the National

Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, replacing Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis.

Elected vice president was Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, who had been secretary. Bishop Raymond W. Lessard of Savannah, Ga., was elected secretary for the two remaining years of Archbishop Keeler's term.

In other actions during their Nov. 6-9 meeting, the bishops:

- approved a food and agricultural policy statement that criticized domestic hunger as "morally intolerable." The 30-page document, approved without dissent, calls for every human being to have enough food, seeks broader ownership of farmland, asks federal programs to attain ade-

quate farm incomes, promotes fair wages and working conditions for farmworkers, and encourages cooperatives and environmental stewardship.

- voted 225-18 to set guidelines for priestless Sunday worship. Vatican approval is needed before the suggested services could be used when no priests are available.

- decided 175-12 to ask that the Vatican approve any requests from bishops in vast missionary territories to permit lay people to perform marriages when no priests or deacons were available. The request for use of Canon 1112 of church law originally came from Archbishop Francis T. Hurley of Anchorage, Alaska.

- approved a 1990 budget of \$31,655,756 for the NCCB-USCC, which is about \$1 million higher than the 1989 budget. By a 165-6 vote, the bishops also approved a levy on dioceses of 15.7 cents per Catholic, and approved (141-29) the use of income from reserves to meet 1991 spending if necessary.

- approved steps for renegotiating the exclusive arrangement the bishops' conference has with the Eternal Word Television Network for broadcasting bishops' conference television programming.

- proposed that Rome authorize substitution of "ustedes" for "vosotros" in Spanish liturgical texts used in this country. Ustedes is the common Spanish word for "you" used in the United States.

- agreed to disband the NCCB ad hoc committee for implementing the bishops' 1986 pastoral letter on the economy. The work of seeking economic justice will be carried out by other NCCB agencies.

In adopting a statement on the Middle East, the bishops said that a sovereign

Palestinian homeland should be negotiated. Such negotiations should include protection of Israel's sovereignty and territorial security.

Archbishop Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles, whose committee drafted the statement, said it offered a "common ground on which meaningful dialogue can be based" for "just and lasting peace" in the Mideast.

On the last day of the meeting, Archbishop May proclaimed two days of prayer — Dec. 8 for peace in Lebanon and Nov. 26 for the persecuted Ukrainian Catholic Church.

In their statement on acquired immune deficiency syndrome, the bishops asked that AIDS patients be treated compassionately. But they said only chastity and an end to drug abuse would stop the AIDS epidemic in the United States.

Urging behavioral change, the bishops' pastoral statement on AIDS opposed the so-called safe-sex promotion of condoms to lessen sexual transmission of the disease. Sexual intercourse, they said, is only moral within heterosexual marriages.

The pastoral plan for blacks endorsed proposals developed by a national congress of black Catholics in Washington in 1987.

Written after consultation with blacks in 107 dioceses, the document deals with concerns over the identity of black Catholics, questions of ministry and leadership within the black Catholic community and the issue of blacks' responsibility to reach out to the larger society.

In a sidelight, some 50 bishops sang and swayed to gospel music African-American style at a Nov. 7 prayer service in Baltimore's Basilica of the Assumption of the

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Bishop Clark elected committee chairman

BALTIMORE (CNS) — By a Nov. 7 vote of 144-129, the U.S. bishops elected Bishop Matthew H. Clark as the new chairman of their standing committee on Women in Society and the Church.

Bishop Clark, who has been a member of the bishops' ad hoc Writing Committee for the Pastoral on Women in Society and in the Church, ran against Bishop James R. Hoffman of the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio.

Bishop Clark replaces the committee's previous chairman, Bishop Joseph L. Inesech of the Diocese of Joliet, Ill., whose term had expired.

The bishops also elected Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York as new chairman of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

He succeeds Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago as chief spokesman for the nation's bishops on abortion, euthanasia and other life issues.

Gathered for the fall general meeting of the NCCB and U.S. Catholic Conference in Baltimore Nov. 6-9, the bishops also on Nov. 7 elected:

- Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston as head of the NCCB Committee on Migration
- Auxiliary Bishop William J.

McCormack of New York as head of the NCCB Committee on Missions.

- Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford, Conn., as head of the NCCB Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices

- Bishop Eldon F. Curtiss of Helena, Mont., as head of the NCCB Committee on Vocations

- Archbishop Rombert G. Weakland of Milwaukee as chairman-elect of the NCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He will become chairman when the term of Archbishop J. Francis Stafford of Denver expires in November 1990.

- Auxiliary Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Chicago as chairman-elect of the NCCB Committee on the Liturgy. He succeeds Bishop Joseph P. Delaney of Fort Worth, Texas, when his term expires in November 1990.

- Bishop James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, as head of the USCC Committee on Domestic Policy

- Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston as head of the USCC Committee on the Campaign for Human Development.

The bishops also elected Bishop Edward T. Hughes of Metuchen, N.J., as a member of the USCC Committee on

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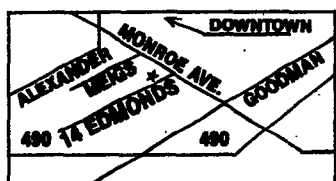


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