

# Laghi praises bishops' pastorals

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Meeting "the crisis in family life" is one of the main challenges facing the U.S. Catholic Church today, Archbishop Pio Laghi said in an interview with Catholic News Service May 1.

Another challenge is learning how to evangelize in the U.S. culture, said the papal pro-nuncio, about to return to Rome for a new Vatican post.

Looking back on his nearly 10 years as papal representative in the United States, the 67-year-old archbishop said that one of the main characteristics of the U.S. church during that period has been fuller implementation of the Second Vatican Council and a deeper integration of its teachings.

He particularly praised the U.S. bishops for their national pastoral letters on war and peace in 1983 and on the economy in 1986.

The way the bishops developed those letters and dealt with the issues was "for me a great moment of learning and of understanding, of understanding how healthy this church is, and also how courageous," the archbishop said.

Archbishop Laghi was interviewed at the Vatican Embassy in Washington shortly before his scheduled May 11 return to Rome where he will take up his new job as head of the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education.

He said he had received no indications who might succeed him as papal pro-nuncio to the United States or when the ap-

pointment might be made.

Archbishop Laghi described the rebuilding of a long-repressed religious culture in Eastern Europe as one of the key tasks facing Rome and the church in Europe today. He said the synod of European bishops recently announced by Pope John Paul II will have to look closely at how to share educational resources to recover what was lost during more than 40 years of communist rule, in which almost all Catholic seminaries, universities and other educational institutions were closed.

When Archbishop Laghi was first named papal representative in the United States in December, 1980, after seven years as the Vatican ambassador to Argentina, his title was apostolic delegate. Because the United States and the Vatican had not had formal diplomatic relations since 1867, his formal assignment was only as liaison between the Vatican and the U.S. Catholic Church.

When U.S.-Vatican diplomatic relations were restored in 1984, he became the papal

pro-nuncio or ambassador to the United States.

Asked if his formal diplomatic status brought any significant change to his previously informal role as a Vatican liaison to the government, the archbishop stressed that from the time he became pro-nuncio he had "chosen purposely" to take a very "low-key" posture diplomatically.

He occasionally delivered appeals from the Holy See to the U.S. government regarding Vatican concerns in such places as Lebanon, the Holy Land and Latin America, he said, and he attended diplomatic briefings by the State Department and some receptions that he was invited to as a diplomat. But the primary exchange of information between the Vatican and the U.S. government comes at the other end, he said, through the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

"I have to say in conscience that this diplomatic activity did not interfere with my

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File photo  
Archbishop Pio Laghi, U.S. papal pro-nuncio, is returning to Rome to head a Vatican congregation.

## Catholics need to give more, panel says

By Tracy Early  
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Panelists for a national teleconference on "Dwindling Church Finances" said Catholics need much more education about their responsibility for financial support of the church.

But the panelists also emphasized that such education be given a biblical and theological basis, and placed in the context of stewardship in all aspects of life.

The teleconference, broadcast by the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America May 3, was one of a series produced by the National Pastoral Life Center in New York and transmitted by satellite to listening groups across the country.

It originated from the studios of the Archdiocese of New York in Yonkers.

Father Philip J. Murnion, director of the National Pastoral Life Center and panel moderator, began the teleconference by showing a previously filmed report by sociologist Father Andrew M. Greeley on survey research he had done.

Low levels of financial giving, Father

Greeley said, correlate with "dissatisfaction and anger among laypeople" over issues of sexuality, particularly birth control, and authority.

Father Greeley reported that many lay people also say they refuse to give because they believe there is a significant amount of corruption in the church.

But even lay people who hold these views will give, the priest-sociologist said, if their local pastor does his job well and maintains a relationship of honesty with them.

Virginia Hodgkinson, vice president for research at the Independent Sector in Washington, said Americans overall had increased the percentage of their income going to religious and other charitable causes since the 1970s, but Catholics had not.

Some priests are "embarrassed" to ask for money, she said, because they tend to think of stewardship only in relation to money, not as a way of managing one's entire life.

Monsignor Austin P. Bennett, finance

director for the Diocese of Brooklyn, said the church has to be run as a community, and not as a business, but nonetheless should be managed with administrative skill.

A policy of "very tight management" has enabled the Brooklyn diocese to keep its subsidized parishes down to about 10 percent, he said, and subsidies are considered loans to be repaid if the parish gets in a condition to do so. "Deficit budgets are not accepted," he said.

Monsignor Bennett said one reason for problems in Catholic giving was large numbers of immigrants from ethnic backgrounds with no tradition of giving to the church.

In the Brooklyn diocese, he said, people are being encouraged not only to give now but also to put the church in their wills.

John F. Benware, administrative services director for the Archdiocese of Chicago, said the financial problems forcing the closing of several Chicago parishes and other archdiocesan institutions were

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