

Bishops discuss celibacy as synod begins

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As the 1990 world Synod of Bishops on priestly formation moved toward its midpoint, a pivotal issue in the debates was the need to enhance and strengthen priestly commitment to celibacy.

Although several delegates questioned obligatory celibacy for Latin-rite priests, most of the more than 220 delegates who discussed the topic during the initial sessions supported celibacy as an indispensable part of a priest's identity.

Other issues that quickly emerged at the monthlong synod which began Sept. 30 were:

- The need for more women in significant roles in seminaries.
- The need for spiritual formation in years prior to entering a major seminary.
- The need for ongoing formation programs to keep priests spiritually and intellectually renewed.

Synod delegates also expressed differing views over seminary education.

Some supported the traditional seminary model by which students are set apart from the rest of the Catholic community for several years of rigorous spiritual and intellectual formation.

Others favored greater stress on pastoral programs that keep seminarians in constant touch with "the agony and the ecstasy" of parishes and the social, cultural and moral problems they will face as priests.

African and Asian bishops called for inclusion of interreligious dialogue courses given the church's existence in many pluralistic societies.

Several bishops asked for radical changes in traditional seminary structures because of the special characteristics and problems in their parts of the world.

Latin America has had few Indian vocations because the traditional seminary "does not correspond to their culture," said Bishop Nestor Herrera Heredia of

Machala, Ecuador.

To an Indian, the traditional seminary "disorients him and makes him a stranger to his own cultural reality," he said.

The synod began, however, with conflicting assessments of the turbulent years since the end of the Second Vatican Council.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said the post-conciliar priesthood was "in crisis."

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands of the Netherlands, meanwhile, warned against "nostalgia" for a pre-conciliar golden age.

Both men spoke Oct. 1, prior to the start of debate on priestly formation, at a special ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, established by Pope Paul VI in 1965.

Since Vatican II the priesthood is seen as less sacramental and Christ is seen as a Marxist-styled political liberator of the poor from the oppression of the rich, said Cardinal Ratzinger, tying this to the post-conciliar drop in vocations.

Priestly sacramental powers come from God and cannot be simply delegated by a community or assumed by an individual, he added.

Cardinal Willebrands warned against a rosy view of pre-conciliar times when "churches were full and vocations plentiful."

This period also saw the rise of totalitarian and atheistic regimes, he said.

The overall tone of the priestly formation debates was set by Cardinal Lucas Moreira Neves of Sao Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, papally appointed recording secretary, responsible for giving orientation to synod discussions.

Delegates should concentrate on strengthening spiritual formation rather than arguing over priestly celibacy, ordaining women and assigning ministerial tasks to laicized married priests, he said.

Without solid spiritual formation,

"bishops risk laying hands on good and nice pagans," he said Oct. 2.

Delegates generally followed his advice as speakers moved into the second week of discussions.

Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago asked for ways of making the positive values of celibacy better understood in societies where "celibacy often appears unattractive and, indeed, unattainable."

Some priests "who have made the commitment say they did so under constraint, because it was a necessary condition for ordination," he said.

Several delegates asked for better sexual screening methods of seminarians and better programs to deal with sexual problems.

Auxiliary Bishop Frederick Henry of London, Ontario, alluded to pedophilia scandals in Canada involving priests and said screening programs could help prevent situations in which priests could "harm God's people" and damage the church's image in society.

Several delegates, such as Bishop Lawrence Burke of Nassau, Bahamas, however, questioned whether the priesthood "should be limited to the male celibate" at a time when "so many communities languish without priests, the sacrifice of Mass and the sacraments."

A strong call for an increased use of qualified women in seminary formation programs was issued by Cardinal Albert Decourtray of Lyons, France, and supported by several others.

A male-female dynamic is needed for "a well-lived celibacy and a well-performed priestly ministry," Cardinal Decourtray said.

In a sign of the political times, this synod marked the first time that bishops from all East European countries were able to attend. It also was the first time that bishops from the Soviet republics of the Ukraine and Byelorussia attended.

Meanwhile, Pope John Paul II lamented that delegates from communist China, Laos and Vietnam were unable to attend.

BLUE MILLION • BLUE CHOICE EXTENDED SUBSCRIBERS

Fonte Pharmacy, Inc. has entered into an agreement with Blue Cross & Blue Shield of the Rochester area to provide up to a 90-day supply of approved maintenance drugs for a \$7 or \$12 co-payment. Ask your physician to call in your prescription to us and one of our drivers will
***deliver to your home within 5 days.**

Call 482-4978 for more information.



**Fonte
Pharmacy, Inc.**

1729 Clifford Ave. • Rochester, New York 14609

"Serving area residents since 1960"

*Delivery area limited to Rochester and adjoining suburbs for a nominal delivery charge.



A sign of

CONTINUING JESUS' MISSION

Pope John Paul II has said that World Mission Sunday should be for all an important annual observance.



Offerings on this day help the young mission churches support the formation of seminarians and catechists, build churches and chapels, provide daily bread for missionaries.

On this World Mission Sunday, October 21, prayers and sacrifices offered through the Propagation of the Faith help continue Jesus' mission. Pray and give generously. Thanks!



The Society for
THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH
...all of us committed to the worldwide mission of Jesus

Enclosed is my special offering for World Mission Sunday:

- \$10 \$15 (supports catechist for one month) \$25
 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other \$ _____
 \$300 supports Religious Sister/Brother for one year
 \$700 supports mission seminarian for one year

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I want to be a monthly donor to the Missions!
Your gift is tax deductible!

#344 10/11/90

INDULGE YOURSELF.



Americans spend an average of 4.6 hours each day watching television. You're probably not the average American, but if you don't have cable, you're probably watching average TV.

For about 60¢ a day you can choose from over 600 programs. That's 18,000 choices a month for just \$18. If you watch television, it makes sense to have choices. Make the choice for the '90's. Choose cable TV.

**SAVE \$30 ON YOUR CONNECTION.
CALL 987-6300 TODAY.**

GRC

We put the vision back in television.

Hurry, offer expires October 31, 1990. Some restrictions may apply.