

Priests' retreat

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"We cannot keep the good news to ourselves. Jesus is the ultimate sacrament of God's love," Bishop D'Sousa continued. "This did not cease with the Ascension, for now with church is the fundamental sacrament of God's love, a sacrament of and for evangelization in His name."

Father Forrest, who organized this year's retreat as he did the 1984 event, spoke of "dynamism" in the work of evangelization.

"Dynamism is perseverance and confidence that we will succeed. It attempts not the easy but the difficult. It gets the job done and done very well," he said.

"Jesus did a dynamic job of being our Redeemer. He was not born where people are born but animals. He did not die surrounded by nurses. He did not nourish us by going into a kitchen and cooking a banquet. He gave us himself as food," Father Forrest said. "Jesus has given us a job and expects us to do it dynamically."

Such dynamism was amply demonstrated by three women speakers who stole the show.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, now 80-years-old, encouraged the assembled priests. "How holy the priest must be. How pure. We come to the priest full of sin and go away a sinner without sin. What a tremendous gift given to the priest to give the gift of a pure heart."

Another speaker was Sister Briega McKenna, an Irish Sister of the Holy Cross, who has been healed of crippling arthritis and is now a well-known retreat

leader to priests all over the world. "Make people aware of the gift of priesthood. What a gift that Jesus has chosen men from among men and given them the power of his authority," she declared.

"The priesthood is not a call or a job, but a gift," Sister McKenna added. "The good fisherman must stay out of sight; his personality must not get in the way of Christ."

"The greatest need," she continued, "is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The more we rationalize, the less we are free. When priests are not free, nobody is."

Priests were reminded of their duty to serve as watchmen for the people — warning them of danger — by the third female speaker, Molly Kelly. "Never denounce

without announcing," she said. "Today in the world an entire system is falling apart at the seams because falsehood dies on its own."

The retreat concluded Sept. 18 with a dramatic closing Mass. Five thousand priests — all wearing matching red stoles — processed across the Piazza of St. Peter's, which was emptied of tourists.

In an hour-long procession, we filled the Basilica of St. Peter awaiting the coming of Pope John Paul II as principal celebrant. Four Syracuse priests and I were fortunate to have third-row seats just a few steps from the papal altar over the Tomb of Peter.

The pope's homily in Italian was translated over our headsets. Jesus is the

model of evangelization, he told us, and no evangelization is possible without the Holy Spirit.

At the root of the evangelization mission of priests, the Holy Father said, must be a "return to the sacramental roots of our priesthood: the Sacrament of Orders 'anointed' us with the sacramental character and 'sanctified us with the Spirit's gift ... The gift of 'holiness' requires continuing 'sanctification.'"

At the end of Mass, the pope imparted his Apostolic Blessing on the gathering, bringing a fitting end to five days of prayer in the heart of the church.

EDITORS' NOTE: Father Gagnier is parochial vicar at St. Patrick's Seneca Falls.

Bishops

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phasis on comfort, material goods and pleasure in society.

The annual decline in the number of priests worldwide has slowed, he said. The latest Vatican statistics, compiled Jan. 1, 1989, showed that the total number of priests dropped by 313.

But gains were made in the Americas, Africa and Asia. The drop in numbers, which includes deaths and resigned priests, came from Europe and Oceania.

The number of ordinations has increased in each of the last 10 years, he said. The latest statistics showed almost 402,000 priests in the world.

At the beginning of the synod's third week, the Vatican published summaries of

written reports submitted by participants.

Most of the reports supported statements made earlier on celibacy, inculturation, spiritual life and ongoing formation.

Archbishop Telesphore P. Toppo of Ranchi, India, wrote that seminaries must prepare students for hard work; "St. Paul went so far as to say, 'If one doesn't work, one shouldn't eat.'"

"This synod, therefore, should see to it that future priests develop a culture of hard work, work in line with their own vocation, but work nevertheless," he said.

Cardinal Ricardo J. Vidal of Cebu, Philippines, asked that national bishops' conferences be given freedom in implementing any guidelines for priestly formation that might result from the synod.

A "fundamental diversity" exists bet-

ween Western and Asian mentalities, he said, and that must be taken into account in determining how best to educate priests from and for those cultures.

Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, superior general of the Jesuits, said that a part of the synod working document that questions the appropriateness of having seminarians study theology in a university "highlights the lack of trust between bishops and Catholic universities."

In their written reports, Cardinal Vidal and Archbishop Juan Ignacio Larrea Holguin of Guayaquil, Ecuador, asked for greater attention to the Bible and Scripture studies in seminaries, especially in light of the growing number of fundamentalist sects that use Catholic ignorance of the Bible as a means of winning followers.

Military aid

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tion, and some senators proposed adding a provision to require the rebels to agree to a cease-fire before aid could be cut, a move they believe would prevent a veto. An amendment for that provision failed 58 to 39.

The sponsors of the amendment, Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., and Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., have opposed any additional stipulations, saying that requiring a cease-fire before a political agree-

ment is reached could drive the rebels from the negotiating table.

The amendment to slash U.S. military aid to El Salvador is part of a foreign aid bill that includes a provision to forgive Egypt's \$7 billion debt to the United States for prior military assistance. The Bush administration has said the debt proposal was essential to maintaining strong Egyptian support for the U.S. Persian Gulf policy.

Hennemeyer said he believed President Bush would not follow through on his threat to veto the bill because the section on forgiving Egypt's debt was very important to the president.

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