

# Prefect explains veto of degree



AP/Wide World Photos  
**THATCHER RESIGNS** — An unidentified woman on the streets of London reads a newspaper story concerning the Nov. 22 resignation of Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

MILWAUKEE (CNS) — One Vatican agency denied Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland of Milwaukee an honorary degree because another Vatican agency, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had not yet evaluated a controversial report on abortion that the archbishop sent to it last May, said Archbishop Pio Laghi.

In a letter dated Nov. 22 and released in Milwaukee Nov. 26, Archbishop Laghi, head of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, apologized for not having contacted Archbishop Weakland before withholding approval of the degree, which the Catholic theology faculty of the University of Fribourg in Switzerland had planned to bestow on him Nov. 15.

Archbishop Laghi, who until earlier this year was Vatican ambassador to the United States, also expressed regret for "the pain you have suffered" and said it was "inadvertently caused."

He described his congregation's decision as an act of "prudent patience" and said he was sorry it was "so negatively received."

The University of Fribourg's theology faculty, which is pontifically chartered, had proposed Archbishop Weakland as one of five individuals to receive honorary degrees during ceremonies marking the university's centenary and 100 years of Catholic social teaching. He was cited for his leadership in developing the U.S. bishops' 1986 national pastoral letter on the U.S. economy.

Since the degree was to be given by a pontifical institute, the Congregation for Catholic Education had veto power over it.

There has been no public indication that Archbishop Weakland is under investigation by the doctrinal congregation or that it asked him for his report on abortion, written after six "listening sessions" in which he asked women of the Milwaukee archdiocese for their views on abortion and related issues.

In a chronology released Nov. 10, after news of the denial of a degree broke, the Milwaukee archdiocese said Archbishop Weakland sent copies of his report to the

doctrinal congregation in late May and had received no response.

In his Nov. 22 letter Archbishop Laghi said: "Since you had sent that text to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I had to await their evaluation of it. Given the importance of the issue of abortion and its pastoral consequences, it was thought that it would not be opportune to ignore or appear to prejudge it, and therefore the 'nihil obstat' (official clearance) to the honorary degree was withheld."

Apologizing for not contacting Archbishop Weakland before his congregation took action, Archbishop Laghi said: "I prefer the way of dialogue. I think you know that that is my normal style. However, in this case there were delays beyond my control, and the university was naturally pressing for a reply."

He said the currently required procedures for clearing a pontifical honorary degree are "complex and ponderous" and that his congregation "tried to satisfy with appropriate dialogue as many of (the involved) parties as we could."

He added that "but for the pressure of time we would have dialogued with you too."

After the Vatican agency refused clearance for honorary degrees to Archbishop Weakland and to a South African Dominican theologian, Father Albert Nolan, the university faculty decided to grant no honorary degrees at its centenary ceremonies "to make it very clear that Rome's decision was unacceptable."

## Church of England divided over women bishops

By Robert Nowell  
Catholic News Service

LONDON — A Church of England committee set up five years ago to consider whether a woman could be a bishop has been unable to agree on an answer, reflecting the division within the church.

The panel has agreed, however, that once women priests are accepted, it would be difficult to say they could not become bishops. The Church of England's general synod will decide in 1992 whether women can be ordained to the priesthood.

The 11-member group included Bishop George Carey of Bath and Wells, England, who in January will succeed Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury as spiritual head of the worldwide Anglican commu-

nion. Bishop Carey favors women's ordination.

Anglican churches are autonomous bodies within a worldwide spiritual union, and most do not allow women to be ordained as priests. Some, such as the U.S. Episcopal Church and Anglican churches in Canada, Hong Kong, Brazil and New Zealand, allow women priests. The U.S. and New Zealand churches have women bishops.

The scope of the committee's work was expanded beyond the question of women bishops to include the nature and function of bishops in the church. The bulk of the group's 354-page report, "Episcopal Ministry," consists of a survey on that broader topic.

The group saw the bishop's role as threefold: providing pastoral leadership for the local Christian community; maintaining contact with leaders of other local Christian communities; and continuing the succession of leaders from the time of the apostles.

The group also defended the presence of bishops in the House of Lords, Britain's upper house of the legislature, where nobility and high-ranking clergy sit as voting members. Twenty-five of the Church of England's 44 heads of dioceses sit as Lords Spiritual in the House, and the report reiterated a 1970 recommendation that other churches should be represented there as well.

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