

# Bishops to act on array of issues at meeting

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — When the U.S. Catholic bishops meet this November, they will face statements on the environment, children and the concerns of Native American concerns. They also will be asked to commit themselves to a new policy for socially responsible investment of their conference funds.

Meeting in Washington Nov. 11-14 as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, the bishops will also be asked to:

- Approve a statement on the teaching ministry of bishops.
- Approve a complete new set of simplified Scripture readings for use in Masses with children.
- Approve a statement on diocesan councils of priests.
- Review current U.S. practice on holy days of obligation.
- Establish norms for lay preaching in churches.
- Decide on a procedure for NCCB review and approval of new Scripture translations in the United States.
- Vote on several financial matters, and on future conference plans and priorities.

The proposed statement on children says the United States has "the highest divorce rate, the highest teen-age pregnancy rate, the highest child poverty rate and the highest abortion rate in the Western world."

It calls for "a spiritual and social reawakening to the moral and human costs of neglecting our children and families."

It challenges families themselves, the church and public authorities to give new attention to the needs of children and family life.

It also calls for changes in international policy to address the needs of millions of children suffering from wars, poverty, hunger, disease and economic exploitation around the world.

"Renewing the Earth" is the title of the proposed statement urging reflection and action on the environment and Catholic social teaching.

"The environmental crisis of our own day constitutes an exceptional call to conversion," it says.

It highlights current environmental problems and describes caring for the environment as a "religious responsibility"

based on a "biblical vision" of humanity's relationship with all of God's creation.

It acknowledges that "Catholic social teaching does not offer a complete environmental ethic." But it spells out a framework of Catholic principles for such an ethic.

It calls on families, scientists, theologians, business leaders, institutions and public authorities to work together to confront the massive problems and "save the planet for our children and generations yet unborn."

The proposed pastoral message on the concerns of Native Americans declares that 1992, the year of the fifth centenary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas, is "a time for remembering, reconciling and recommitting" the church in its relationship with America's native people.

It urges Christians to "right the evils of the past and present" that Native Americans have suffered from those who followed Columbus to the Americas.

It calls for greater recognition of Native American legal rights, the promotion of Native American leadership in the church, increased participation of Native Americans in church life and a church-culture relationship in which the Gospel and Native American cultures enrich each other.

The proposed "Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines" for the USCC investment portfolio would formally commit the conference for the first time to using its investments to promote community reinvestment by financial institutions and to combat discrimination by race or gender in corporations.

It would also open the possibility for the first time of USCC participation in shareholder resolutions urging more socially responsible company policies — an area in which many non-Catholic church bodies and many Catholic organizations and religious orders have been engaged for 20 years or more.

It would spell out systematically the existing conference policy of excluding from the portfolio corporations that produce goods or services in armaments, abortion and contraception, and the conference policy since 1986 of using its investments to promote an end to apartheid in South Africa.

The decision to review holy days of obligation in the United States resulted from various requests by individual bishops, followed by a nationwide survey.

More than 80 percent of the bishops who responded to the survey said they would like to consider the issue again.

Two-thirds of the nation's active bishops responded to the survey, which included a "straw poll" on a variety of questions regarding individual holy days and general policies.

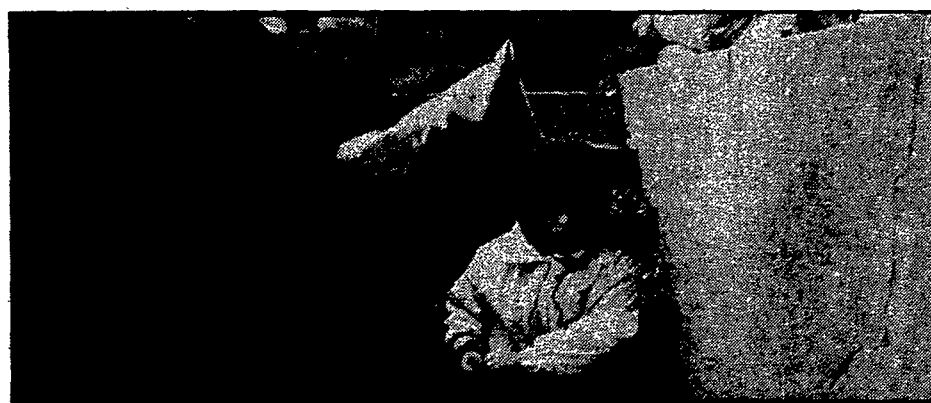
The bishops will be asked to vote on a number of options — all of which will be presented with no recommendation one way or the other. But the straw poll indicated that the bishops would be most likely to pass the proposal shifting the observance of Ascension Thursday to the following Sunday. In the straw poll 149 bishops favored the shift and only 19 objected to it.

The lay organization Catholics United

for the Faith, which claims a membership of 23,000 Catholics, has issued a statement opposing all efforts to reduce the number of holy days.

In an Oct. 28 statement, CUF President James Likoudis characterized the proposals before the bishops as "only the latest in a long series of efforts on the part of certain liturgists who appear to have little or no understanding of the spiritual needs or desires of the laity."

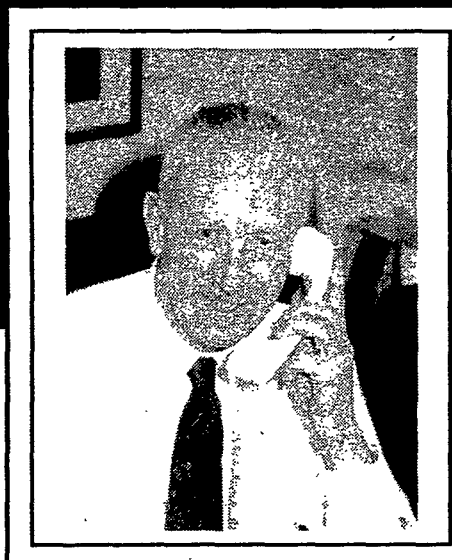
The statement, which was sent to the *Catholic Courier* by facsimile transmitter, said CUF "expresses the hope that the U.S. bishops ... will retain the present 6 Holy Days and provide for the additional observance of such important Feasts as Epiphany, Corpus Christi, St. Joseph, and Sts. Peter and Paul ..."



SAFE HAVEN — A young Croatian girl takes cover at a shelter in Vinkovci, eastern Croatia, during shelling Oct. 24. The girl became separated from her parents during an artillery attack by Yugoslav federal army forces.

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Vocation Directress  
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