

# Bishops keep holy days, leave other votes open

WASHINGTON (CNS) — As the U.S. bishops adjourned their annual fall meeting Nov. 14, final decisions on holy days of obligation and a proposed statement on Native American concerns remained in the hands of the bishops who were absent.

The six existing U.S. holy days were retained, although some could still be lifted when they fall on a Saturday or Monday.

The bishops approved statements on children, the environment, priests' councils and the teaching ministry of diocesan bishops, but voted down proposed norms for lay preaching.

On liturgical matters, the bishops approved a new Lectionary for Masses with Children and several other liturgical changes, all of which require Vatican confirmation.

The prelates were nearly unanimous in their approval of a plan to use non-bishop scholars to approve Scripture translations. They also set \$3 million as the maximum amount for which they can sell or mortgage property without obtaining prior Vatican approval.

The bishops approved new social-responsibility guidelines for their conferences' investment portfolio — worth about \$105 million — and a 1992 budget of just under \$40 million.

They chose seven committee chairmen and elected Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez of Santa Fe, N.M., to a three-year term as secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference.

In a voice vote, they agreed to change their guidelines for allocating funds collected in a nationwide collection for retired religious.

But holy days were the hottest topic at the bishops' Nov. 11-14 meeting, prompting extensive and, at times, impassioned debate prior to balloting.

Bishops from large Eastern dioceses led the fight for retaining all holy days, while bishops from the Midwest and

West pushed for change.

The bishops voted to retain all six holy days of obligation currently observed by U.S. Latin-rite Catholics. But their vote was inconclusive on a proposal to eliminate the Mass obligation for three holy days — Jan. 1, Aug. 15 and Nov. 1 — when those dates fall on Saturday or Monday.

Results of that vote would not be known until bishops who did not attend the meeting were polled by mail.

More than half the bishops voted to eliminate the Mass obligation for Jan. 1 and to move the observance of Ascension to Sunday, but neither proposal garnered the two-thirds majority required for approval.

Under conference rules, at least 180 votes, or two-thirds of the conference's 269 active Latin-rite bishops was required to pass any of the proposals. Eastern-rite bishops could not vote since changes would affect only Latin-rite Catholics.

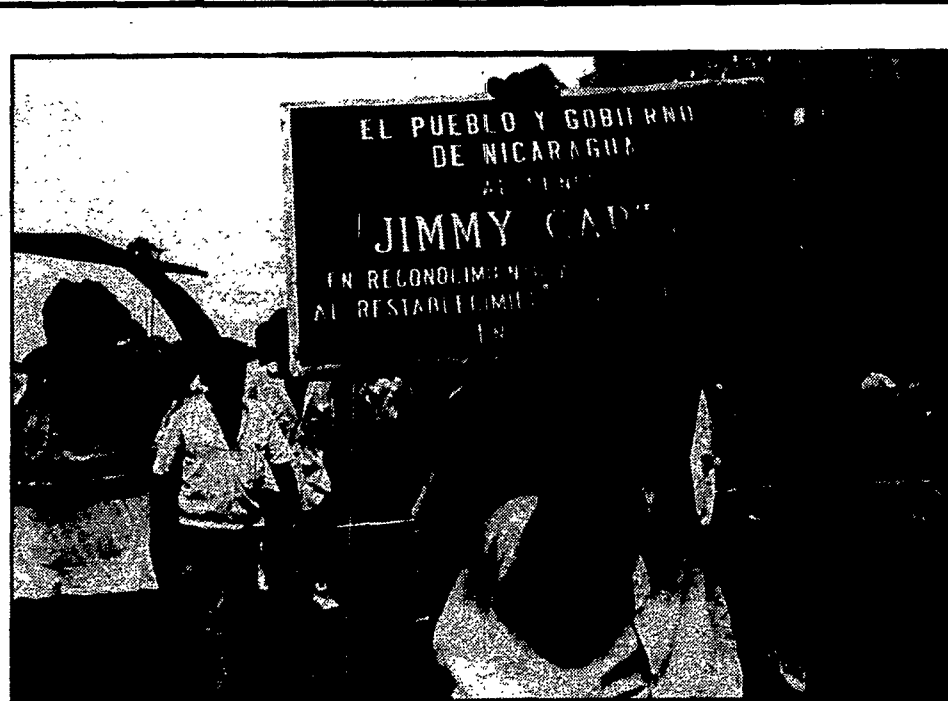
Some bishops left Washington before the meeting ended, making it impossible to attain 180 affirmative votes on one remaining ballot. That proposal — to accept a statement pledging the bishops to address the socioeconomic plight of Native Americans — won 165-5, but cannot be confirmed until absent bishops are polled by mail.

Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk, NCCB-USCC president, termed the statement a "shoo-in" once mail ballots are returned.

Bishop Elden F. Curtiss of Helena, Mont., had urged his fellow bishops to approve the 14-page document which expressed "solidarity with the Native American community" as the United States commemorates the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the New World.

Titled "1992: A Time for Remembering, Reconciling and Recommitting Ourselves as a People — Pastoral Reflections on the Fifth Centenary and Native American People," the document says the bishops will advocate for Native Americans on "health, housing, employment, education, poverty and other national issues."

The statement pledging the church's commitment to children and families was approved by a 221-4 vote Nov. 14.



AP/Wide World Photos  
**PILLAGED PLAQUES** — Rioters carry plaques taken from the Monument to Peace in Managua, Nicaragua Nov. 9 during rioting sparked after the bombing of the tomb of Sandinista hero Carlos Fonseca. The monument honors individuals who helped bring an end to the Contra war.

One archbishop termed it "the most important document we've dealt with at this meeting."

Archbishop James P. Lyke of Atlanta, in praising the statement titled "Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation and World," urged that it be made "accessible to all the people" when it is formally released on Jan. 6, the feast of the Epiphany.

The nearly 50-page statement urges the Catholic community to become "a persistent, informed and committed voice for children and families."

The bishops also voted to insert into the statement an amendment on dealing with the AIDS crisis. The amendment states: "Instead of promoting the illusion of 'safe sex,' we need to warn our children and society of the dangers of sexual promiscuity and drug abuse.

... Our moral convictions about expressing human sexuality within marriage now represent not only appropriate moral guidance, but also wise health counsel."

The statement on the environment, titled "Renewing the Face of the Earth," was approved on a voice vote Nov. 14 with little debate. It says a Catholic vision of the environment does not mean choosing between people and the planet.

The statement on priests' councils,

approved on a voice vote Nov. 14, discusses priests' councils from four perspectives: their historical development, their theological basis, the canonical or legal aspects of such councils, and practical aspects of establishing and maintaining effective priests' councils.

The document on the bishops' teaching role and on their response to those who do not accept some church teachings prompted much more debate. Despite the discussion, it was approved on a voice vote.

Developed over a five-year period by the bishops' Committee on Doctrine, the 93-page text was titled, "The Teaching Ministry of the Diocesan Bishop: A Pastoral Reflection."

In other action the bishops voted down lay-preaching norms, 141-107, after some bishops called them unclear and unnecessary.

Auxiliary Bishop Emil A. Wcela of Rockville Centre, N.Y., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices, had asked approval of the norms.

Support for the new Lectionary for Masses with Children was substantial, however, after an amendment was approved stipulating that a study be made within three years of the "pedagogic implications of introducing children to the liturgy."

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