

# Process eventually will bring blessings

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

In my years as a bishop, I have attended 26 meetings of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops — give or take a meeting or two. In all of those years, I remember no meeting that generated as much comment as our meeting held in Washington last week.

That comment was generated, of course, by the discussion about and vote on the proposed pastoral letter on the concerns of women for church and society.

As you know from extensive media reports, including those offered in this edition of the *Catholic Courier*, the draft failed to receive the two-thirds majority necessary for its adoption as a pastoral letter of the conference. You may be aware as well that I was among the 110 bishops who judged that the document should not be accepted.

I must confess to you that, although I voted according to my best pastoral judgment, it gave me no pleasure to cast the no vote. When we began the project nine years ago, our hope had been that we would be able to produce a document that would win enthusiastic support from the vast majority of our community. For a variety of reasons, we were not able to achieve that goal.

Several of those reasons were cited by the



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**LONG THE WAY**

bishops during discussions last week.

Among those mentioned were the following: 1) We were not able to find a pastorally effective way to deal with the issue of the ordination of women; 2) over the course of the four official drafts of the pastoral, we lost a sense of vitality and connection with the lived experience of women; 3) the drafts lost their initial dialogic character and gradually took on the quality and tone of a lecture; and 4) we seemed unable or unwilling to recognize the real complexity of issues and tended to go back to old answers in an effort to respond to new questions.

I think there is some truth in all of those

observations. But I believe also that the truth of it all will become more clear when we've all had a chance to step back from and think about the experiences of the past nine years.

In the meantime, I remain grateful for the privilege of working on this project, which I believe will in the long run prove to be a great blessing for our church.

It is difficult to specify why that will be so. But think of the number of people in all parts of our country who participated in the discussions and consultation generated by the effort. I think it's fair to say that never in the history of the church have the concerns of women been so extensively and thoroughly discussed.

Think of the many parts of the world in which the concerns and condition of women are coming to the fore. Those concerns may take a variety of shapes according to cultural differences, but there is little doubt that the phenomenon is not just a national one but a worldwide one.

Thanks to all of you for the prayerful support you offered to the bishops as we met in Washington last week. Thanks, too, to those who have spoken words of encouragement and support since I returned.

Please accept my very best wishes for a blessed Thanksgiving time.

Peace to all.

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**THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS**  
 WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?  
 The following prayer was dictated by Our Lord to Sister Josefa Menendez at Poitiers, France, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 3, 1921, with the instruction: "Josefa! Repeat these words every day."  
**JESUS PRAYER FOR HIS PRIESTS**

O Jesus, by Thy most loving Heart, I implore Thee to inflame with zeal for Thy love and glory all the priests of the world, all missionaries and those whose office it is to preach Thy word, that on fire with holy zeal, they may snatch souls from the devil and lead them into the shelter of Thy Heart, where for ever they may glorify Thee.  
 Imprimatur: E. Morrogh Bernard, Vic. Gen. Westmonasterii, May 5, 1953

Mass  
 Rosary  
 Fasting  
 Day Offering  
 Eucharistic Adoration  
 Divine Mercy Chaplet

Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him

**DECEMBER, 1992**

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