

# Pope cautions bishops on 'extreme' feminism

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The church must support the rights of women and seriously reflect on their role in the church, but without compromising with an "extreme" and ideological form of feminism, Pope John Paul II told a group of U.S. bishops.

In dealing with the question, church leaders should be careful not to raise false hopes, particularly on the church's refusal to ordain women as priests, the pope said July 2.

The pope was speaking to some 30 bishops from several Eastern and Southern states, in Rome for their consultative "ad limina" visits. His talk examined the many kinds of assistance lay people are able to provide pastors in the United States, a situation which he called a "blessing."

The role of women in the church needs to be addressed with "a keen sense of its importance" and with an eye toward the profound transformations that have affected women's place in society, he said.

"Respect for women's rights is without doubt an essential step toward a more just and mature society, and the church cannot fail to make her own this worthy objective," he said. He cited his own efforts and those of bishops to appreciate women's contributions to the church.

The pope said he was concerned, dissatisfaction with the church's position on women — especially, he said, among those who fail to distinguish between women's human and civil rights in society and their ministries and functions in the church. This can easily lead to "presenting false demands and raising false hopes," he said.

"What is certain is that the question cannot be resolved through a compromise with a feminism which polarizes along bitter, ideological lines," he said.

"It is not simply that some people claim a right for women to be admitted to the ordained priesthood. In its extreme form, it is the Christian faith

itself which is in danger of being undermined," he said.

The pope said these types of feminism are sometimes marked by forms of "nature worship" and celebration of myths and symbols that have taken the place of true Christian worship.

"Unfortunately this kind of feminism is being encouraged by some in the church, including some women religious, whose beliefs, attitudes and behavior no longer correspond to what the Gospel and the church teach," he said.

As pastors, he said, bishops should challenge these individuals and groups and call them to "honest and sincere" dialogue on the issue of women's expectations.

The pope said the church's long-standing practice not to ordain women as priests is a distinction of roles that "in no way favors the superiority of some over others." He called on the bishops to help the faithful understand and accept the church's position and said it would "amount to a betrayal of them if we fail to do so."

He said that while the role of the parish has always been one of the strengths of the U.S. church, this community sense has been weakened somewhat by the fragmentation of modern life, especially where issues of doctrine or liturgy have polarized people.

"A great effort is needed by priests and laity to renew parish life" as a communion that values the complementary gifts of its members, he said.

He praised the lay contributions to church life in areas of religious education, pastoral counseling, social services and administration. At the same time, he said, church members should realize that there is a difference between the lay and priestly roles.

He said some bishops had mentioned that the emphasis on baptismal equality can lead to "minimizing the real distinction between the royal priesthood of all believers and the ministerial priesthood" of the clergy. Bishops should make clear that this difference "has nothing to do with 'power' understood in terms of privilege or dominion," he said.



AP/Wide World Photos

## Mourning in Manila

A Roman Catholic priest sprinkles holy water on coffins during a July 6 funeral Mass in Bocaue, located north of Manila, Philippines. More than 300 people drowned July 2 during a religious river festival when a floating chapel capsized in the Bocaue River.

## Balkans

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wire," the U.N. Protection Force in Macedonia to which the United States has committed 300 soldiers.

But Father J. Bryan Hehir said in a recent address at the University of Dayton that the United States probably should not intervene.

"There is a moment of opportunity, and I don't think it's now. It would've been much, much earlier," said Father Hehir, a professor of religion and society at Harvard Divinity School.

"The question is not only what reasons, if any, justify intervention, but

who should do it? Who can do it successfully?... And who can do it and then get out?"

Two New England men who planned to go into Bosnia later in July said they were going to do it for peace.

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy of Worcester, Mass., and Christopher J. Allen-Doucot of Hartford, Conn., were to go to a "peace camp" in Bosnia July 28 to spend their time helping war victims and working on diplomatic, monitoring and cultural efforts.

Contributing to this roundup were Tanya Connor in Worcester, Mark Pattison in Washington and John Thavis in Vatican City.

## MISSION NEWS

a publication for the Propagation of the Faith

Vietnam. For some, a word that stirs up very personal memories; for all of us, it is a name that has been written on the pages of American history.

These days, the Church in that southeast Asian nation sees progress, though limited, toward religious freedom. At the end of 1991, a congregation of 15,000 attended the first ordination of a bishop since the Communist takeover in 1975. Several months later, in February 1992, the government asked a group of local Religious Sisters in the southern part of Vietnam to re-open Church-run schools. Also last year, authorities allowed the re-opening of a fifth seminary.

Yet with the steps forward, there are "steps back," such as the limiting of priestly ordinations. This past summer, 43 men were ready for ordination; the government permitted only 37 to be ordained.



Woman prays in cathedral in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)



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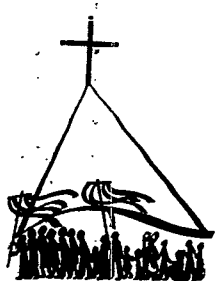
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## CELEBRATE WITH US!

Join us in celebrating two joyous events in the life of the local church — the culmination of the Seventh Diocesan Synod and the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Diocese of Rochester.

In conjunction with the diocesan Office of the Synod, the *Catholic Courier* will present two commemorative publications: a special synod/anniversary issue of the *Courier* and a keepsake program for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mass.



The *Catholic Courier's* special edition — to be published September 30, 1993 — will be distributed by mail to nearly 49,000 subscribers and to an additional 1,200 delegates to the General Synod. It will contain articles on various aspects of diocesan history, the agenda for the General Synod, and analyses of the recommendations on which delegates will be asked to vote.

The keepsake booklet will serve as a program for the Anniversary Liturgy, which will be celebrated at the Monroe County War Memorial at the close of the General Synod on Sunday, October 3, 1993, before a gathering of approximately 5,000 members of the diocese and church dignitaries.

Your organization can participate in the festivities — and help support the Diocesan Synod — by placing a congratulatory advertisement in these two special publications (a portion of the proceeds will help underwrite costs of the General Synod).

To place your ad in these special commemorative publications call Kathy Welsh or Bernie Puglisi at (716)328-4340. Advertising deadline is Friday, July 23, 1993.