



# CATHOLIC COURIER

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## Giving goal

During an Oct. 26 press conference at the Pastoral Center in Gates, Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced that this year's goal for the Thanks Giving Appeal is \$4.4 million. Page 3.

# Visits allow bishops chance to reaffirm ties with the pope

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — They aren't branch managers called to the head office for a grilling by the CEO.

When bishops make their "ad limina" visits to the Vatican every five years, their private meetings with Pope John Paul II are informal, encouraging and sometimes very personal.

The topics range from vocations to the local economy, and from the culture's influence on religious practice to the bishop's health or his concern for a family member.

U.S. bishops have been making their "ad limina" visits in 1993 — with Bishop Matthew H. Clark joining the bishops of New York, Minnesota and North and South Dakota Oct. 9-19.

In addition to the individual sessions with the pope, the "ad liminas" — the Latin phrase means "to the threshold" — include group meetings, meals and a concelebrated Mass with the pontiff, as well as meetings with Vatican officials. The visits are preceded three to six months by detailed reports sent to Rome to describe the church's status in the individual dioceses.

But the centerpiece of the visits are always the 15- or 20-minute private conversations with the pope. The innovation of private papal meetings came with the pontificate of Pope John Paul II.

Each "ad limina" also includes a general audience with the pontiff, during which the pope delivers a talk. Vatican officials have said the pope's talks during his meetings with U.S. bishops, taken as a whole, provide a good overall review of pastoral concerns in the United States — seen from

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a Vatican perspective.

During the 1993 "ad limina" visits, Pope John Paul II's talks to U.S. bishops have focused largely on the need for clear and firm presentation of church teaching.

The pope also repeatedly emphasized the importance of the new "Catechism of the Catholic Church" as a tool of teaching that could help launch a "national recatechizing endeavor" in the United States.

But the bishops face an awkward practical problem: the English translation of the catechism has been held up at the Vatican for months. Bishop Clark noted that during his recent visit to the Vatican, he was told that the English translation will not be ready until early in 1994.

Speaking in April, the pope stressed that the U.S. Catholic education system must be strengthened and preserved.

In May, the pope explored another aspect of the theme when he said that only a complete presentation of church teaching can curb the

influence of sects and New Age ideas.

And in June, the pope turned to what he acknowledged was one of the most difficult of church teachings to follow: the teaching against artificial birth control. One reason Catholic couples have problems with the birth control issue is "inadequate and insufficient explanation" by church authorities, he said.

For the bishops, the "ad limina" visits offer an opportunity to discuss a wide range of pastoral problems, in particular the recent cases of sexual abuse by clergy. In their meetings with the pope and Vatican officials earlier this year, many pointed out that church law often makes defrocking known sex abusers a long and difficult process.

The pope responded in June with a letter expressing concern for the problem and support for the bishops, and announcing a joint U.S.-Vatican commission to consider more efficient ways to deal with offenders. The bishops were pleased that direct access to the pope achieved results on a difficult issue.

In a July talk, the pope focused on the role of women in the church. His message was twofold: While the church must defend women's legiti-

mate rights in society and in the church, there should be no compromise with an "extreme" feminism that divides people along "bitter, ideological lines."

He said this type of feminism had ushered in forms of "nature worship" and other pagan practices that take the place of Christian worship. He said he was particularly

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# 'ad limina'

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