

WEDDING FEATURE

Pope urges attention to mixed marriages Message honors Migration Day

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — With migration producing more religiously mixed marriages, the church needs to give special pastoral attention to unions between Catholics and non-Christians, Pope John Paul II said in a World Migration Day message.

The pope, who dedicated this year's message to family issues, said pastors should respect the religious experience of mixed marriages while being concerned for the faith of the Catholic spouse and that of the children.

The 1993-94 message was released at the Vatican in September. World Migration Day is observed on a date set by local bishops' conferences and in the United States is generally observed in January.

The pope said all mixed marriages re-

quire a basic understanding by spouses of each other's religion and a knowledge of what divides and unites their churches.

He pointed to the considerable increase in marriages between Catholics and non-Christians in recent years. The religious respect shown for such unions should never overshadow the duty of bishops and bishops' conferences to take adequate pastoral measures, he said.

These measures should aim to "guarantee the defense of the faith of the Catholic spouse and the protection of its free exercise," above all concerning the duty to make every effort to have the children baptized and educated in the faith, he said.

The pope said this principle was outlined in his apostolic exhortation "Familiaris Consortio" ("Community of the Family") in 1981. It is "all the more urgent when there is a strong probability that the Catholic (spouse) must follow the non-Christian to a country where the dominant religion makes its influence felt throughout the entire social fabric, restricting de facto every space

for freedom of other religious expression," he said. The pope did not name specific countries.

Generally, local churches should aim at integrating migrant populations into their community of worship — but this process "should not be rushed," the pope said. Pastors should see that the migrants' links to their own spiritual heritage are maintained, he said.

When it comes to working conditions, local churches should help ensure that migrant communities are not exploited, the pope said. On the other hand, pastors should help make sure migrants are not overly absorbed by their work, to the detriment of family relations, he said.

The pope said the whole church community is called upon to create a climate of welcome through a spirit of sharing and friendship.

"Migrants do not only need 'things.' They are seeking above all true fraternal understanding," he said.

He said states have a particular duty to defend migrant populations from any attempt at discrimination or racism.

SBI will open classes to prospective students

St. Bernard's Institute has scheduled a "Sit in Class Week" Feb. 28 to March 5 for all individuals interested in studying at the graduate school.

Classes available on the Rochester campus, 1100 South Goodman St., are: The Theology of Luke-Acts; New Testament Christologies; Western Liturgical Traditions; Introduction to Pastoral Counseling; Liturgy and Catechesis; Key Issues in Church History; and Theology of Social Ministry.

In addition, Introduction to Pastoral Counseling will be offered Tuesday evening at St. Mother Our Mother Parish, 816 W. Broad St., Horseheads.

To register for the week, contact Georgia Crissy, SBI's director of admissions, at 716/271-1320, extension 299.



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