

Pontiff opens monthlong Synod

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II opened a monthlong examination of religious orders by saying the church strengthens itself and increases its service to humanity when it promotes religious life.

At the opening Mass Oct. 2 for the world Synod of Bishops on religious life, the pope said the synod should help the church better appreciate religious life and help consecrated men and women renew their commitment to the church and the world.

Pope John Paul, walking without visible discomfort and speaking with a strong voice, concelebrated the Mass with the 244 synod members in St. Peter's Basilica.

"By promoting consecrated life, the church intends not only to provide for its interior renewal, but also to render a service to humanity," the pope said at his midday Angelus address after the Mass.

The choice that religious and consecrated people make for their life, "especially through the practice of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, is nothing other than a great choice of love, or even, a superabundance of love," the pope said.

Through their vows, religious men and women become brothers and sisters to all people, offering a listening ear, welcome and sharing, he said.

Cardinal George Basil Hume of Westminster, England, said if consecrated life is promoted as a truly radical way of following Christ, the number and quality of men and women who publicly profess vows will increase.

Introducing the discussion Oct. 3, the



File photo

Pope John Paul II

cardinal outlined challenges the bishops should address. They included:

- Guiding and helping religious communities discern their lifestyles and mission while respecting their autonomy, as well as encouraging collaboration with diocesan priests and lay people.

- Promoting a renewed emphasis on spirituality "because it is the heart of consecrated life, shows its priority contribution to the church and is the source of its apostolic dynamism."

- Structuring the community life of consecrated people in the face of cultures which are fast-changing, complex and often fragmented.

- Promoting vocations.

- Paying particular attention to the

place of consecrated women in the church and the world.

"The place of consecrated women is a challenge that deserves great attention on the part of this assembly," he said, noting that about 72 percent of the consecrated people in the church are women.

Especially through education and health care, he said, "consecrated life has in fact been a place of promotion for the consecrated women herself and for a service of promotion on behalf of other women in society and in the church."

Cardinal Hume said the pope's spring letter explaining why the church cannot ordain women to the priesthood "does not limit in any way the promotion of women and women religious in the church, including in consultations and decision-making and, even more, in evangelization."

The cardinal, a Benedictine monk, told his fellow bishops that the lifestyle of religious should receive special attention at the synod.

"It must express the authenticity of the consecration, being a sign of the liberating force of the Gospel and an alternative to worldly ways," he said.

"In this context, the time has come to re-open the debate on the habit as a sign of a consecrated person," he said, arguing that inside and outside the church, the wearing of a habit has more importance than some people claim.

As the church works and prays for new vocations to the religious life, especially in places where more and more lay men and women are making commitments to doing the church's work, Cardinal Hume said, the special meaning of consecration must be clear.

Pro-life leaders blast OK of embryo research

BETHESDA, Md. — Pro-life leaders Sept. 27 sharply criticized recommendations that called for federal funding of a wide range of research on human embryos and for creating embryos solely for experimentation. Released at a meeting in Bethesda, the final report of a National Institutes of Health panel outlines acceptable research, to be done under "strict guidelines." It lists nonacceptable research, such as harvesting eggs from aborted fetuses, and discusses scientific projects that warrant "additional review." Acceptable research includes studies aimed at improving successful pregnancies; understanding the process of fertilization better; and aiding in the diagnosis of genetic problems in an embryo before it is implanted.

New trial ordered for inmate on death row

CHICAGO — The Illinois Supreme Court ordered a new trial for a death row inmate for whom Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago and Pope John Paul II have made appeals. On Sept. 22, the court ruled that Manuel Salazar's 1985 conviction for the shooting death of Joliet police officer Martin Murrin was tainted because of improper instructions to the jury. Supporters of Salazar were jubilant, saying he is a victim of police hostility toward Hispanics and other minorities. But police officials said the ruling is a blow to Murrin's widow and children and to police officers.

Vatican criticized for actions at conference

STRASBOURG, France — The European Parliament criticized the Vatican for leading the U.N. population and development conference "up a blind alley" over abortion. Vatican delegates and Muslim fundamentalists prevented a deeper discussion of development and overpopulation issues, the regional body said a resolution passed Sept. 29. The resolution was introduced by Italian, Dutch and Belgian members and approved by a 214-182 vote. Parliamentary resolutions are not binding on member states.

Pope welcomes Israeli ambassador to Rome

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy — Pope John Paul II welcomed Israel's first ambassador to the Vatican and said the meeting opened a "new epoch" of cooperation between the Holy See and the Jewish state. In accepting the credentials of Samuel Hadas Sept. 29, the pope pledged additional church efforts against anti-Semitism and encouraged further progress in Middle East peace negotiations. He also repeated a Vatican request for "international guarantees" to protect the sacred character of Jerusalem, a city holy to Christians, Muslims and Jews. The encounter at the pope's summer villa in Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome, was the final chapter in the process of normalizing relations between the Vatican and Israel. The two states signed an agreement last December paving the way for the exchange of ambassadors.

Families of troops in Haiti remain on edge

By John Strange and Sue Hetzler
Catholic News Service

RALEIGH, N.C. — Perhaps no one has been watching events unfolding in Haiti more intensely than the spouses and family members of soldiers sent on what has turned into a peacekeeping mission.

U.S. troops who were readied for an invasion of Haiti have become key players in the United Nations-sponsored peacekeeping mission Operation Restore Democracy. The invasion was averted by last-minute negotiations.

When he was called up for the mission, Marine 1st Lt. Bob Kummeth had just packed up his family's belongings to move from Pensacola, Fla., to Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C. The day he reported for work, he was promptly told to repack his gear for deployment to Haiti.

Camp Lejeune and Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, N.C., have played a major role in the operation.

On Aug. 12, Kummeth left for Haiti on the USS Wasp, an amphibious assault ship. In tow were his flight log book, his grandmother's rosary in one hand, a Bible in the other and his Catholic faith in his heart.

"I think he draws on his faith a lot more than he thinks," said Heather Kummeth, his wife. "In one of his letters he told me he says the rosary every night. I'm sure he attends the Mass on ship, too."

Kelly Peachey, secretary at St. Ann Parish in Fayetteville, didn't know what to brace for. Her husband, Army Spec. Scott Peachey, was in a military "lockdown," meaning he was cut off from his family for security reasons.

Peachey had been on one of the planes flying to Haiti before being sum-

moned back after the Sept. 18 agreement was reached between U.S. negotiators and Haitian military rulers. He couldn't call home until Sept. 20.

"It bothered me," Kelly Peachey told the *NC Catholic*, Raleigh's diocesan newspaper. "It was more stressful than a regular training exercise. I was bothered more by not being involved, and not

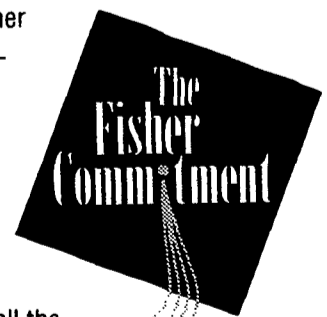
knowing what was going on."

Scott, who has started the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to join the Catholic Church, went to Mass before boarding the Haiti-bound plane. A Catholic chaplain gave him a rosary.

"The thought of going into combat makes you think a lot about life after death," he said.

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