

## Bishops plan agenda for upcoming meeting

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Catholic bishops will face new liturgical decisions and statements on violence, medical ethics and women in the church when they meet in Washington Nov. 14-17. They will also be asked to extend the national collection for the church in Eastern and Central Europe another year, review several committee structures, approve a \$41.3 million 1995 budget for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference and elect a new NCCB-USCC general secretary. On liturgy they will be asked to approve the first three segments of a whole new translation from Latin of the Sacramentary, the official book of prayers used at Mass. Part of a massive project under way for several years now, the revised Sacramentary will not be completed until the bishops deal with four additional segments in coming years.

## Prelate reports generosity in wake of financial crisis

SANTA FE, N.M. — Response to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe's financial crisis, caused by numerous lawsuits claiming sexual abuse of minors by priests over a 30-year period, has reached about \$2.7 million in donations — \$1.8 million for a lawsuit settlement fund, and another \$900,000 for a victim counseling fund. Reporting on his first year as head of the archdiocese, Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan praised his parishes and his people for their efforts. "The generosity of you and your fellow Catholics to help with the crises has overwhelmed me and in fact has brought me to tears," he said in an October column in *People of God*, the archdiocesan newspaper.

## Church leaders hailing cease-fire by loyalists

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — Ireland's Catholic primate and the bishop of Belfast hailed the declaration of a cease-fire by loyalist guerrillas as a major step toward peace in Northern Ireland and an opportunity for genuine political progress. Cardinal Cahal Daly, primate of all Ireland, said that the British and Irish governments "must lose no time in seizing this opportunity." Bishop Patrick Walsh of Down and Connor, Northern Ireland, whose diocese includes Belfast, called the cease-fire declaration a "major step" toward peace. The two churchmen were reacting to the declaration by Protestant paramilitaries Oct. 13 that they were suspending their campaign.



AP/Wide World

A support unit with the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division out of Fort Stewart, Ga., marches past a line of engineering vehicles prior to U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry's Oct. 14 visit to Doha Camp, located north of Kuwait City. Although some troopers suspect they may have come a long way for war games, the showdown with Saddam Hussein is not over. Iraq thwarted Security Council expectations earlier this week by failing to recognize the sovereignty of Kuwait.

## Letter on divorce affirms church's traditional stand

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The Vatican has reiterated the church's ban on Communion by divorced Catholics in invalid second marriages, forcing three German bishops to rescind a 1993 policy that allowed some exceptions to the rule.

But if the Vatican congregation hoped to end further discussion of the matter in the church, the German response dashed those hopes.

The Vatican statement came in the form of a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to the world's bishops, dated Sept. 14 and released Oct. 14. It said the church cannot ignore Jesus' clear teaching on the indissolubility of marriage.

The German prelates — Archbishop Oskar Saier of Freiburg and Bishops Karl Lehmann of Mainz and Walter Kasper of Rottenburg-Stuttgart — issued a nine-page statement Oct. 14 in which they rescinded their policy permitting some pastoral flexibility.

But they defended the theological basis of their 1993 stand and said the issue should still be considered an open question.

They said that their development of a pastoral approach was not in conflict with the indissolubility of marriage. They expressed hope that church dialogue will continue on the controversial issue so that a deeper "theologically and pastorally responsible answer" will be found.

Just two days before the Vatican letter came out, the Canon Law Society of America, meeting in Atlanta, unanimously approved a resolution establish-

ing a task force to "study pastoral options for the Christian initiation and sacramental reconciliation of those who are in irregular marriages."

The society's resolution addressed the issue of millions of baptized Catholics barred from Communion by an irregular second marriage.

But it also highlighted another pastoral-canonical issue that comes up increasingly in the United States: the obstacle faced by many adults who wish to become Catholic but are barred from joining the church because of an irregular marriage.

The Vatican letter was signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the doctrinal congregation, and approved by Pope John Paul II. It was titled, "Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Catholics."

It said, "In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ, the church affirms that a new union cannot be recognized as valid if the preceding marriage was valid."

It cited the passage from Mark's Gospel where Jesus says anyone who divorces his or her spouse and marries again commits adultery.

The Vatican called on pastors to give "special attention" to "the difficulties and sufferings of those faithful in irregular marriage situations."

Such people "are not excluded from ecclesial communion," it said. It added that the church "is concerned to accompany them pastorally and invite them to share in the life of the church in the measure that is compatible with the dispositions of the divine law, from which the church has no power to dispense."

## Haitians greet president with religious fervor

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CNS) — Thousands of Haitians greeted the return of their exiled president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, with a religious fervor that showed a regard for the president beyond his political identity.

"We see him as a prophet," one resident of the poor neighborhood of Carrefour, south of Port-au-Prince, told *The Washington Post*. "He is all our dreams come true."

"Oh, he is God's son, without question," said Denise Vendredi who was watching the arrival ceremony Oct. 15 on a television her neighbor set up inside a shrine he had built on his front porch, the newspaper reported.

At the ceremony which returned him to the presidential palace, Father Aristide called to the crowd: "Has my return brought you hope?"

"Yes," thousands gathered for the event shouted back.

Well before he became involved in his crusade for political office, Father Aristide was a revered figure among the Haitian poor, who form the vast majority of the country's population.

He was well-known as a firebrand critic of the Haitian elite and what was regarded as their perpetuation of a class-ridden, unjust social system.

A survivor of at least one assassination attempt, Father Aristide was expelled from his religious order, the Salesians, in 1988 for allegedly inciting Haitians to hatred and violence. He remains a Catholic priest, though he cannot publicly practice his ministry.

On the eve of his return as president, the capital city exploded into spontaneous carnivals in many of its poorest neighborhoods.

People no longer cowed by paramilitary enforcers took to the streets and partied long into the night to celebrate Father Aristide's impending arrival.

They danced through streets festooned with colorful banners and portraits of the returning president, and along walls coated with new paint applied by volunteer brigades. From the tops of cars, they shouted Aristide slogans and waved their hands.

Painters were still at work on the bandshell of the central Champ des Mars square while a band pounded out throbbing rhythms to a nighttime audience.

Residents of one of the most wretched slums, Cite Soleil, hauled what belongings they had outside to display them along with homemade shrines to the returning president.

Father Aristide was depicted in liturgical garb in paintings on slum walls.

A plane carrying the only man ever democratically elected as Haiti's president flew from Andrews Air Force Base near Washington on Oct. 15 with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and scores of other dignitaries on board.

"(This means) liberation for the people," said Florence Pierre, 38. "We have been drowning in misery for years."

By dawn, Haitians were already gathering outside the palace in a square decorated with hundreds of posters of Aristide strung from lampposts.

Thousands of heavily armed U.S. troops and squadrons of tanks provided security for Father Aristide and stood by to make sure celebrations of his return did not get out of hand.

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