

Liturgy is key concern of bishops at meeting

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Liturgical matters for the Latin-rite church formed a big part of the U.S. bishops' fall meeting Nov. 14-17, even with the most prominent and potentially controversial elements taken off the agenda.

Liturgical actions occupied hundreds of pages of documentation — a stack of paper three inches thick — and several hours of floor discussion and voting.

At one point the nation's Eastern-rite bishops — who have no vote on Latin-rite liturgy decisions — took advantage of a long session on liturgy to hold their own separate Eastern-rite meeting for nearly two hours.

The net result of the liturgy decisions was approval of a new Eucharistic Prayer for U.S. use and adoption of the first two of seven segments which, when completed, will make up a revised Sacramentary.

The Sacramentary is the book of prayers at Mass. It is separate from the Lectionary, which contains the Scripture readings proclaimed at Mass.

A two-thirds approval of all Latin-rite bishops is required for all liturgical decisions. In fact, more than nine out of 10 bishops who voted favored the liturgy proposals, and none came close to defeat.

Specifically, the bishops approved:

- Use of the 1974 Swiss Synod Eucharistic Prayer in the United States and a provisional English text of the prayer composed by the International Commission for English in the Liturgy.

- Segment 1 of a revised Sacramentary, after taking out 32 of the nearly 800 prayers and sending them back to ICEL with suggestions for further revision.

- Segment 2 of the Sacramentary, with the exception of 21 prayers sent back to ICEL to be reconsidered.

- The pastoral introductions to Segments 1 and 2, designed to help priests and parish liturgy leaders use the Sacramentary correctly and effectively.

Those actions came after Segment 3 — the Order of the Mass — and a major supplementary text — U.S. adaptations in the Order of the Mass — were withdrawn from the agenda because the bishops' Committee on Doctrine had not yet completed its review of Segment 3.

The bishops are expected to take up Segment 3 and the U.S. adaptations to it at their general meeting in June, 1995.

The issues to be considered then include decisions on moving the exchange of peace, changing the translation of the creed, and other changes in daily celebration of Mass that are likely to attract significant public attention and a lively debate among the bishops.

In a voice vote Nov. 17 the bishops also approved a proposal by Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston to form an ad hoc committee to design a forum on the translation of sacred texts. The committee is to present a proposal on such a forum for the bishops to consider at their June meeting.

The forum proposal is another step in discussions between bishops and scholars about liturgical texts. These were started with a workshop on ICEL's procedures and principles at the bishops' June 1993 meeting in New Orleans and continued in a special study day of bishops with U.S. scholars in San Diego in June 1994.

Liturgy was also an important topic for the bishops when they were out of the public eye. At a session closed to the press Nov. 15, some bishops expressed anger and disappointment at recent Vatican actions against inclusive language in Scripture texts previously approved for liturgical use and at long Vatican delays in approving a proposed New American Bible Lectionary, some bishops told Catholic News Service afterwards.

The Swiss Eucharistic Prayer approved by the bishops is formally titled "Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions."

Following wide use in French, Italian and German — the three original languages in which it was composed in 1974 — and subsequently in Spanish as well, in 1991 the Vatican issued an official Latin version of it. The English translation was then composed by ICEL at the request of the Australian bishops.

Although it is considered one Eucharistic Prayer, it has four Prefaces, each on a different theme, and four alternative prayers after the consecration, each

Continued on page 7

U.S. resentment in Manila



AP/Wide World Photos

A demonstrator wielding a flag pole clashes with policeman Nov. 12 during an anti-U.S. demonstration in Manila. Filipinos were protesting President Clinton's state visit to the Philippines. Police fired tear gas and water cannons to stop about 500 demonstrators carrying torches down a main street toward Clinton's hotel. No arrests or injuries were reported.

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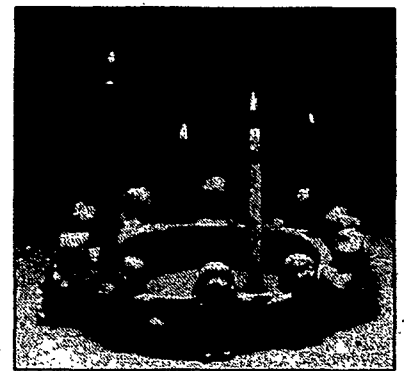


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