

WORLD & NATION

NCCB head criticizes referendum

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The head of the U.S. bishops said that a national signature campaign to bring changes in the church may cause confusion and division.

"I appeal to the leaders of this referendum not to create new divisions in our own ecclesial family by continued challenges to the teachings and the authority of the church that has nurtured the faith of us all," said Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"For it to be successful, dialogue needs to be honest. ... I do not believe that this referendum announced today contributes toward creating a spirit of dialogue," he said. "I ask those approached to sign this petition to reflect prayerfully and seriously on the confusion that may be created by a technique so inadequate and inappropriate to deal with these matters."

Bishop Pilla issued his statement May 22 hours after a press conference at which We Are Church announced plans to gather at least one million U.S. Catholic signatures on a church reform referendum before Pentecost 1997.

Loretto Sister Maureen Fiedler, coordinator of the campaign, called the declaration that the coalition is asking Catholics to sign "the rough draft of an agenda for the Third Vatican Council."

It calls for:

Full equality for women in the church, including their ordination to diaconate and priesthood.

Optional celibacy for priests.

Participation of the laity in the selection of bishops and pastors.

The declaration also says, "We believe in a church which affirms:

"The goodness of sexuality.

"The primacy of conscience in deciding issues of sexual morality — for example: birth control.

"The human rights of all persons regardless of sexual orientation.

"The importance and urgency of issues other than sexual morality — for example: peace and nonviolence, social justice, preservation of the environment."

It calls for a church that "embraces and welcomes those who are divorced and remarried, married priests, theologians and others who exercise freedom of speech."

The campaign is a project of the Women's Ordination Conference and Catholics Speak Out. It is modeled after signature campaigns for church reform recently conducted by Catholics in several European countries.

Other groups forming the national task force coordinating the U.S. campaign are the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, Call to Action, Dignity/USA, Federation of Christian Ministries, New Ways Ministry, Priests for Equality, Pax Christi-Maine, and Corpus, the National Association for a Married Priesthood.

Officials of these groups also spoke at the press conference, along with Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice, a group that has been condemned by the U.S. bishops for its support of legal abortion. Her organization is one of several groups that are co-sponsors of the campaign but not a part of the task force.

Bishop Pilla noted that although the organizers are calling the signature campaign a referendum, "this referendum asks only for agreement. Thus it is hardly an opportunity for all Catholics to enter into dialogue."

"The text of the referendum also mixes matters on which discussion and debate

are possible with others that involve church teaching," he said.

He said the U.S. bishops and the Holy See favor the goal of "greater participation in the life of the church by laity and, in particular, by women.

"It is finding ways to implement it that can be difficult, given past history and the need in the universal church to be sensitive to both its local and worldwide expressions," he said.

"A more painful honesty for those sponsoring the referendum is to admit that they are, in some instances, challenging church teachings," he added. "A vague appeal to 'reform' is insufficient reason to challenge either church teaching or practice."

He said the Second Vatican Council, "the source of reform of the church in our time, clearly affirmed the centrality of the papal ministry to the church and the obligation of Catholics to assent to the teaching of the Holy Father even when he is not teaching infallibly."

"This referendum calls for debate on longstanding teachings which the present Holy Father and his immediate predecessors have addressed and reaffirmed. Fidelity to the council means acceptance of these decisions," he said.



Arson investigators and federal agents move debris at the Matthew's Murkland Presbyterian Church June 7 in Charlotte, N.C. — one of more than 50 black churches in the South targeted by arsonists in the last 18 months. In a June 10 statement, Bishop Anthony M. Pilla, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, called upon the appropriate authorities "and all people of good will everywhere, to do what must be done to bring these shameful episodes to a conclusion."

Reuters/CNS

Access denied Call to Action

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin of Hartford, Conn., and Bishop John M. D'Arcy of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., have denied use of church facilities to local chapters of Call to Action, a national group of reform-minded Catholics.

Their actions followed the recent legislation issued in March by Bishop Fabian W. Bruskewitz of Lincoln, Neb., declaring that any Catholic in his diocese who still belonged to Call to Action as of May 15 was excommunicated.

Bishop D'Arcy, in a letter to his priests May 20, said it is the policy of the diocese that "any group associated with the national Call to Action should not meet on church property."

His decision came after Holy Cross Parish in South Bend refused permission for a local Call to Action chapter to meet in his church.

The group appealed to the bishop, who set up a commission to investigate the matter. In March the commission recommended that Bishop D'Arcy not let the local chapter meet on church property in light of its affiliation with a national organization that publicly opposes some church teachings.

In Connecticut, Archbishop Cronin wrote to his priests April 26 informing them that he had denied a request from the New England chapter of Call to Action for permission to use church facilities in the archdiocese.

Last year Bishop John R. Keating of Arlington, Va., told his priests that they were not to provide space on church property for local Call to Action meetings.

When Bishop Bruskewitz issued legislation excommunicating local members of the group, his actions gained international media attention.

Recently Call to Action was among a coalition of groups that started a "We Are Church" campaign seeking signatures of at least a million U.S. Catholics wanting changes in some church teachings and practices, including church opposition to women priests, married priests and artificial contraception. (See article this page.)

CALENDAR

Chemung Schuyler

Fundraisers

■ **THU, JUNE 20** — Spaghetti supper; St. Patrick's Parish hall, W. Clinton St., Elmira; 5-7 p.m.

Religious Activities

■ **FRI, JUNE 14** — Charismatic Mass: followed by healing and prayer needs; St. Cecilia's Church, 954 Lake St., Elmira; 7:30 p.m.

Monroe County

Adult Education

■ **MON, JUNE 24** — Registration deadline: for June

28 buffet luncheon; "The Last Friday Series"; University Club, 26 Broadway, Rochester; 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m.; buffet luncheon \$10 per person; Fr. Lee P. Chase, speaker.

Religious Activities ■ CONTINUES TO JUNE

24 — Novena: to Our Lady of Perpetual Help; 1089 Joseph Ave., Rochester; 7 p.m.

■ **SUN, JUNE 16** — Field Mass: honoring deceased members of Knights of St. John, Ladies Auxiliary, and their family members; St. Bernard's Chapel, All Saints Mausoleum, Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, 2461 Lake Ave., Rochester; 10 a.m. Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, celebrant; co-sponsored by Holy Sepulchre Cemetery and the Knights of St. John; open to the public; call 716/889-2919, 227-6536 or 467-4881.

■ **MON, JUNE 17** — Renewal in the Spirit & Secular Franciscans: St. Charles Borromeo Prayer

Center, 3011 Dewey Ave., Rochester; 7:30 p.m.

■ **WED, JUNE 19** — Diocesan Charismatic Mass: St. John Fisher College, Murphy Hall, 3690 East Ave., Rochester; 7:30 p.m.; Father William Moorby, celebrant; all welcome.

■ **THU, JUNE 20** — Celebration of the Eucharist: followed by a reflection on "Monks and the Laity Walking Together Into the Next Century"; The Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse Chapel, 4095 East Ave., Rochester; 7:30 p.m.; Father Martin Boler, OSB, prior of Mount Saviour Monastery, Pine City, N.Y., speaker; refreshments will be served; call 716/383-1868.

■ **SAT, JUNE 22** — Liturgy: and spiritual sharing for Catholic women; part of monthly gathering of Society of St. Francis de Sales; Mercy Motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester; 1:30 p.m.; this is the last gathering until

September; call Beth, 716/482-3636 or Dora, 663-7309.

Social Activities

■ **SAT, JUNE 15** — Dinner night: sponsored by St. Thomas More Singles' Club; Bounty Harbor Restaurant, 1384 Empire Blvd., Webster; 6:30 p.m.; call Anne, 716/482-5656.

■ **SAT, JUNE 22** — Dinner night: sponsored by St. Thomas More Club Singles' Club; Ruby Tuesday Restaurant, 687 Mosley Road, Fairport; 6:30 p.m.; call Anne, 716/482-5656.

■ **SUN, JUNE 23** — Appreciation party: in honor of Father David Reid, SSCC., and Barbara Classen; St. Francis of Assisi parish hall, 77 Whitney St., Rochester. 1:30-5 p.m.; sponsored by the parish councils of St. Peter and Paul Church and St. Francis of Assisi Church; reservations due by June 17; call 716/227-0242.

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Religious Activities

■ **WED, JUNE 19** — Queen of Peace Night: Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua; Fr. Charles Manning, pastor of St. Pius V Church, Cohocton, celebrant; 7 p.m.; call Anne, 716/394-0604.

■ **FRI, JUNE 21** — Reservation deadline: for July 23-26 trip to Ste. Anne de Beaupre Shrine in Trois Rivières; sponsored by St. Michael's Church group, Lyons; call Dee Pacello, 315/946-9414.

Social Activities

■ **SAT, JUNE 15** — Pig roast: and dance; St. Januarius Church, 180 N. Main St., Naples; 5:30 p.m.; \$10; \$5 for those aged 12 and under.