

WORLD & NATION

Bishop says all gays should 'come out'

PITTSBURGH (CNS) — At a national symposium on ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics — attended by Bishop Matthew H. Clark — Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit urged homosexual priests and bishops as well as lay people to "come out."

"I hope that within our church every gay person, every lesbian person, every bisexual person or transgendered person will come out, because that is how our church is going to truly change," he said March 8.

"I would say this especially to bishops and priests within our church," he added. "I can't tell you the number of letters that I have received in the last few years from priests who say they are gay but who are afraid to come out. What a loss that is to our church."

New Ways Ministry, sponsor of the March 7-9 symposium in Pittsburgh, called it the "largest discussion of lesbian/gay issues by Catholic church leaders in the history of the American church." New Ways is an unofficial, Catholic-oriented ministry based in Mount Rainier, Md.

The meeting drew about 600 participants, including theologians and other scholars, religious congregation leaders, and parish and diocesan leaders in homosexual ministry as well as homosexual Catholics.

Francis DeBernardo, New Ways Ministry executive director, said nearly half the participants were priests or religious and three-fourths were in pastoral ministry, education or diocesan or religious order leadership posts.

They included Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata of the Catholic Gay & Lesbian Family Ministry in the Diocese of Rochester.

Bishop Gumbleton, leading a session on pastoral care of homosexual people, recounted the difficulties he went through five years ago when he learned that his brother, Daniel, was gay.

"When my brother came out, I had to come to grips with something that I had never done before But when I finally was forced to come to grips with it and when I truly accepted it, and then ... spoke about it in a public forum, it did a lot to change me and change my life," he said.

"I began to receive contacts from gay and lesbian people, families and friends, and I discovered that there is an area of ministry in our church that has been cruelly neglected," he said.

He quoted from the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition.... They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of discrimination in their regard must be avoided."

"Even though that teaching of our church is so clear, we still find priests who are afraid to come out because they will be discriminated against," he said.

Leading the session with Bishop Gumbleton was Bishop Clark, who just a week earlier presided at a special Mass for homosexuals that drew 1,300 people to the Rochester cathedral.

In his 35 years of celebrating Masses as a priest and bishop, Bishop Clark said, "I can't name another that touched my heart so deeply as the one that we celebrated at Sacred Heart Cathedral."

He said the Mass brought "a lot of healing, a lot of hopes restored, some reconciliation and I think a new way of looking at the issues."

In another session March 8, Mercy Sister Margaret A. Farley said biblical and historical studies "reveal the early roots of Christian sexual norms to be in Stoic philosophy more than in the Bible."

Sister Farley, a professor of Christian ethics at Yale University Divinity School, said there have been major developments "even in Roman Catholic sexual ethics" that call for rethinking the traditional absolute prohibition against homosexual activity in Catholic teaching.

One key shift within the past century, she said, has been a move away from the idea of all sexuality as "fundamentally disordered" to an understanding of it "as an expression and a cause of love." Another was the move away from "the procreative norm as the sole or even primary justification of sexual activity."



CNS/Reuters

New head

Sister Nirmala greets journalists March 14 at the headquarters of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. The order's senior nuns elected her to replace Mother Teresa as superior of the congregation March 13.

Archbishop McCarrick urges support for Irish peace efforts

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Americans must not tire of supporting those who are working nonviolently for a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland, said the head of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Policy.

"In recent years, the U.S. government

and countless individuals and groups have given invaluable support to the peace process," said Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark in an annual message for the feast of St. Patrick, March 17.

"Today, this support and encouragement are as important as ever," he said.

Charismatic renewal to mark 30th anniversary in June

STUEBENVILLE, Ohio, (CNS) — A conference celebrating the 30th anniversary of the charismatic renewal will be held June 27-29 at the Pittsburgh convention center.

"It will be a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving to God for 30 years of his love and

fidelity," said the chairman of the organizing committee, Bishop Sam G. Jacobs of Alexandria, La. He made the comments in a statement released by Franciscan University in Steubenville, a conference co-sponsor.

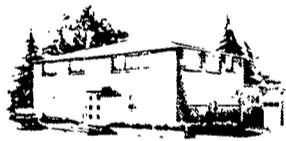
Bishop wants truth known on partial-birth abortions

ERIE, Pa. (CNS) — Americans "have a right to hear the truth" about partial-birth abortion, Bishop Donald W. Trautman of Erie said March 14.

"Partial-birth abortion has as much to do with obstetric medicine as carbon monoxide in the hands of Dr. Jack Kevorkian has to do with geriatrics," he said.

In his weekly column in his diocesan newspaper, the *Lake Shore Visitor*, Bishop Trautman asked his people to write their legislators and urge a federal ban on partial-birth abortions.

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—from *The Gift of Peace*

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