

# WORLD & NATION

## Synod of Bishops for America underway in Rome

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The bishops of the Western Hemisphere are committed to working together to strengthen the Catholic Church, uphold Christian morality and promote justice and solidarity, said leaders of the Synod of Bishops for America.

While acknowledging that the Caribbean, North, South and Central America have marked differences, the bishops praised Pope John Paul II's decision to hold one synod for the entire region.

"I think that sense of seeing us as a unified group of pilgrims, as church with that wonderful exchange — North, Central and South — is a great vision and a great hope," Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles said Nov. 17.

The cardinal, one of the papally appointed synod presidents, and other synod officers held a press conference after the gathering's first working session.

The main focus of the opening session was an outline of the topics facing the synod. Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval Iniguez of Guadalajara, the synod's recording secretary, said the gathering would focus on the new evangelization of the region, promoting solidarity and working for justice, including in the area of international economic relations.

The question of Latin America's foreign debt and Pope John Paul's suggestion that the celebration of the year 2000 include some debt forgiveness was acknowledged as one of the most concrete issues the synod will discuss.

"We as pastors are looking at it because of this tremendous negative impact it has on people," Cardinal Mahony said at the press conference.

"Keep in mind that so much of this money that was borrowed in Latin America did not go to the benefit of the people," through new schools, hospitals or other



Bishops from North, Central and South America gather for the first working session of the Synod of Bishops for America Nov. 17.

services to improve their lives, the cardinal said. Instead, corrupt government officials pocketed a chunk of the aid.

On the second day of the synod, Pope John Paul met privately with James D. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank. The Vatican announced the meeting, but released no information on the discussion.

At the Nov. 17 press conference, Honduran Archbishop Oscar Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, president of the Latin American bishops' council, said he and other council representatives have met with World Bank and International Monetary Fund officials to discuss the prospects of easing the debt.

But Latin American church leaders are not simply begging for debt forgiveness, he said.

"We are convinced that the problem of the debt won't be resolved until there is a battle against corruption in our countries," he said.

With the Cuban and Haitian bishops taking the lead, the synod also is expected to discuss the morality of economic em-

bargoes, such as those imposed by the United States against Cuba.

"We don't think embargoes are the correct response to problems. They strike the poor ... and they bear no fruit," Archbishop Rodriguez said. "The only embargo which should be imposed is that on arms sales, because they bring death."

In his opening presentation to the synod, as well as in his remarks to the press, Cardinal Sandoval insisted that the synod's discussion of any topic must be seen in light of the Catholic faith.

"Our goals can be met only through an encounter with the living Christ," he said in his report to the synod.

The building of charity, solidarity and communion among all the peoples of the Americas must be based on unity in Christ, he said.

Among the concerns highlighted by Cardinal Sandoval was what many Latin American church leaders see as a "coordinated plan" to expand the presence of non-Catholic churches in the region.

He spoke of "the invasion of sects, which

do not act in accordance with the Gospel, but attack the church of God."

Later, in response, Archbishop Francis J. Spence of Kingston, Ontario, told reporters that the situation of ecumenism and relations among churches in North America "is somewhat different," but that did not mean that the synod should set the issue aside.

"We have something to learn from them, and they have things to learn from us," the archbishop said.

Cardinal Mahony said the synod leadership did not want to focus only on problems, although synod members would examine them honestly and realistically.

"But I would hope that during the course of these days we would see a greater emphasis on the opportunities, because I believe we are going to see a lot of suggestions and maybe even initiatives for much closer collaboration with the churches throughout all the Americas," the cardinal said.

### Senator lauds Day's memory

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., honored Dorothy Day on the 100th anniversary of her birth with a Senate resolution commending her as "an inspiration to those who try to live their faith."

"The life of Dorothy Day is central to modern Catholic social thought," he said Nov. 15 in introducing the resolution.

Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, was born Nov. 8, 1897, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Just as Jesus befriended the tax collector and the prostitute, Dorothy Day embraced the drug addict and the disenfranchised," Moynihan said. "She saw Christ in everyone — especially in the poor and the oppressed — and treated people accordingly."

"Dorothy Day," the resolution stated, "was a woman who lived a life of voluntary poverty, guided by the principles of social justice and solidarity with the poor."

The text of the resolution was sent to New York Cardinal John J. O'Connor, who announced Nov. 9 that he would gather people acquainted with the life of Dorothy Day to consider initiating her cause for canonization.

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