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Bishop Matthew H. Clark was among the U.S. bishops meeting with Pope John Paul II and Vatican officials during their *ad limina* visits Feb. 19 to March 1.

Pope urges U.S. bishops to witness Gospel truths

By Cindy WoodenCatholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Catholic Church and the people of the United States need religious leaders who proclaim the Gospel truths with conviction and courage, Pope John Paul II said.

"A bishop's task is none other than this: to be a convincing witness to and a courageous teacher of the truth that makes man free," the pope said Feb. 27 in remarks prepared for a group of U.S. bishops.

The bishops from New York state and from the Archdiocese of Military Services formed the first group of U.S. bishops

making their ad limina visits to Rome this year. Bishops are required to make the visits every five years, and all U.S. bishops who head dioceses are to make the visits sometime in 1998. (See Bishop Clark's account of his visit, Page 2.)

In interviews with Catholic News Service, the bishops expressed appreciation for the amount of time Pope John Paul dedicated to each one of them in individual meetings. While most of the bishops said the pope looked physically weaker than he did five years ago, they said his questions were just as perceptive and his sense of humor was intact.

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