

Bishops accept social teaching, media statements

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

PITTSBURGH—The U.S. Catholic bishops June 19 approved a Lectionary for Mass and issued statements on Catholic social teaching and on sex and violence in the media.

Meeting June 18-20 at the Pittsburgh Hilton Towers Hotel, the bishops also discussed the recent Synod of Bishops for America, a draft of proposed new moral guidelines for Catholic Campaign for Human Development funding and a draft of a resource paper on reconciliation for the new millennium.

They voted 196-6 to approve Volume 2 of a new English-language Lectionary. It contains the Scripture readings for Masses on weekdays, feasts of saints and various other occasions.

Since they approved Volume 1 last year—the readings for Sundays and certain major feasts—their action in Pittsburgh marked the end of a long process begun in the early 1990s, when they approved a different version of a new Lectionary which was rejected by the Holy See.

The new Lectionary, both volumes, is the result of a compromise worked out with Vatican officials after they objected to some aspects of the earlier translation, including some techniques used to make the English more inclusive.

It is expected that Volume 1, which has already been confirmed by Rome, will be authorized for use in U.S. churches beginning the first Sunday of Advent.

The bishops' new statement on sex and violence in the media, approved by a vote of 207-11, is titled, "Renewing the Mind of the Media."

It is the first document the bishops have issued specifically on the problems of sex

and violence in the media.

"The media have such potential to bring truth and beauty into the lives of billions of people that we cannot permit them to be the arena of those who would pervert God's gift of the body and sexuality," it says.

It decries not only "pornography and graphic, gratuitous violence" but also the pervasive use in the mainstream media of "sex and violence in a frivolous and titillating way."

Bishop Robert N. Lynch of St. Petersburg, Fla., chairman of the bishops' Communications Committee, called it a "fundamental document" that will establish policy positions and serve as a framework for further action.

The document urges parents to teach their children how to use media responsibly. It calls on the entertainment industry and all those in the media business to recognize the impact of the media on society and to set standards for themselves.

It rejects censorship but urges government to make full use of its constitutionally established regulatory role to require more responsible use of the airwaves.

It questions the level of violence in some video games and says the growing usefulness of the Internet is compromised by the "adult" and hate sites available on it.

The bishops approved a statement, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions," by a vote of 213-5.

The document calls Catholic social teaching "a central and essential element of our faith" but says too many Catholics are not familiar with the church's social teachings and do not understand the role it should have in their lives.

It calls for efforts at every level of the church's educational and formation activities to make Catholic social teaching an integral part of what children and adults



Doug Kaup/CNS

Bishop Tod Brown, left, of Boise, Idaho, and Bishop Paul Loverde of Ogdensburg, N.Y., share breakfast and some conversation in the lobby of the Pittsburgh Hilton June 19 before a session of the U.S. bishops' spring meeting.

learn about the church and their faith.

"If Catholic education and formation fails to communicate our social tradition, it is not fully Catholic," the statement says.

Jointly prepared by three bishops' committees—education, domestic policy and international policy—the statement was issued as a reflection on the findings of the bishops' Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education.

The task force, formed by the three committees in 1995 and headed by now-retired Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, had among its 30 members leading Catholic educators and heads of na-

tional Catholic education, formation and social justice organizations.

Findings and recommendations of the task force were to be published by the bishops along with their statement.

Preceding the meeting the bishops had an all-morning workshop June 18 on issues related to clergy sexual abuse of minors.

Following the business meeting, about 80 bishops stayed on to attend a National Symposium for Vocations. The June 20-21 symposium featured Cardinal Pio Laghi, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, as keynote speaker and chief celebrant of the closing Mass.



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