

WORLD & NATION

Bishops work on ambitious end-of-millennium list

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. bishops opened their last meeting of the millennium Nov. 15 by beginning work on an ambitious array of documents covering topics from Catholic colleges to the elderly, from adult faith formation to the new millennium itself.

The bishops devoted the first morning of their Nov. 15-18 general meeting in Washington to preliminary consideration of eight action items.

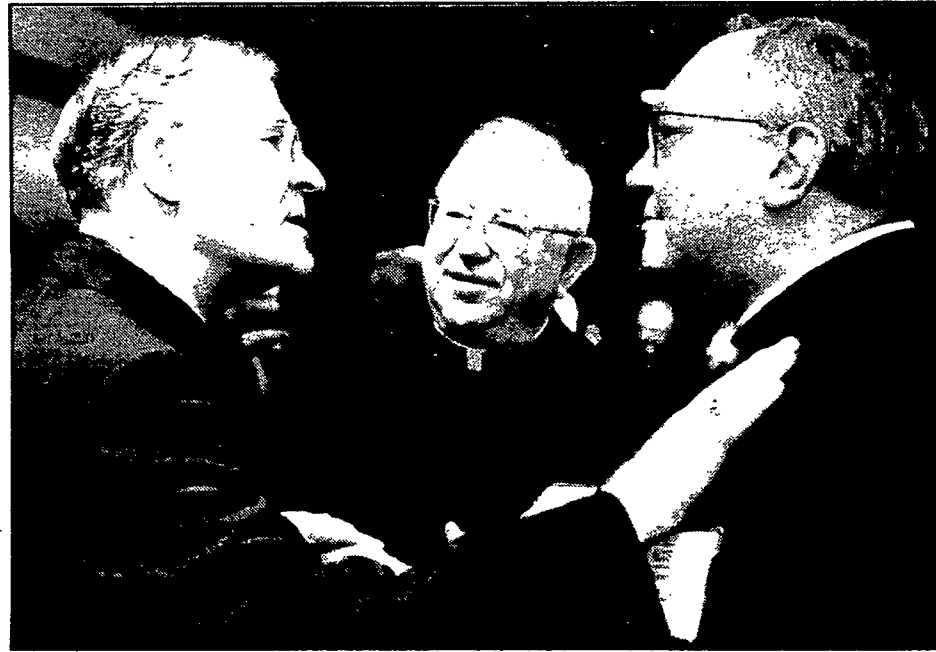
A ninth, involving changes in the structure of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference, was postponed until Nov. 16 because Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, who chairs the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Revision of Statutes and Bylaws, was hospitalized in Washington with chest pains.

Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston, NCCB-USCC president, opened the meeting with a talk summarizing distractions and challenges facing the church as it enters the new millennium, but calling on the trust and courage exhibited by U.S. church leaders throughout its history.

"Our predecessors bequeathed to us a strong and dynamic church," Bishop Fiorenza said. "They faced the significant issues of their times, and, like them, we must face the issues that will come our way in the future."

Through this century, the bishops' agenda has dealt with the defense of life from conception through natural death "from the threats of abortion, hunger and poverty, racism, war and weapons of mass destruction, capital punishment and euthanasia," he added.

The review of those agendas "is a wholesome reminder that we are part of a great tradition of episcopal service which stretches across the centuries, and, in our



Nancy Wiehac/CNS

U.S. bishops in Washington for their annual fall meeting greet one another at briefing on stem-cell research Nov. 14. From left is Archbishop Elden F. Curtiss of Omaha, Neb.; Auxiliary Bishop William F. Murphy of Boston; and Bishop Robert C. Morlino of Helena, Mont.

case, from Archbishop (John) Carroll (of Baltimore) and the other bishops who have gone before us," the bishop said.

The tradition stretches into the new millennium, "and we are the ones who, in God's providence, will bring the teaching of the apostles into the next millennium of Christian faith," he added.

Among the issues to be tackled were norms for Catholic higher education, pastoral messages on charity and on the blessings of age, and two messages — one long, one shorter — for the jubilee year.

The proposed norms implementing Pope John Paul II's 1990 apostolic exhor-

tation, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, have gone through a number of drafts during the past eight years. (See story below.)

The proposed document on the blessings of age is addressed not just to the elderly, but to all Catholics, Bishop Joseph P. Delaney of Fort Worth, Texas, said in introducing the text Nov. 15.

"It challenges faith communities to fully incorporate older persons into those

communities," he said. The 6,000-word document was to be voted on Nov. 18.

Presenting two proposed statements on the jubilee year, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., said the bishops hoped to bring about "a national attitude adjustment" for the new millennium. The bishops were to vote Nov. 17 on two versions of the message — a brief "popularized" version addressed to all Americans and a longer message directed to church leaders and lay Catholics.

The primary message of both texts is that "because of God's love for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, each person has the capacity for good," Bishop Gregory said.

Other action items receiving a first look Nov. 15 were:

- Proposed guidelines for the celebration of the Eucharist.

- A 10,000-word pastoral message on charity that says Catholics "cannot remain idle witnesses" amid the tragedies of poverty, hunger, human suffering and other social sins.

- A pastoral plan on adult faith formation, which stresses the importance of lifelong education to help adult Catholics make their faith stronger and more mature.

- A series of norms on admission of seminary candidates who had formerly been in other seminaries or religious-order formation houses.

Due for discussion but no vote were draft documents on church art and architecture; the ongoing formation of priests and ecclesial lay ministry.

Higher ed talk continues; vote nears on U.S. norms

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON - Proposed norms for U.S. Catholic higher education have been reworked "to build in more flexibility," Bishop John J. Leibrecht of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Mo., told the U.S. bishops Nov. 15 at the opening session of their fall meeting.

Bishop Leibrecht heads the bishops' Committee for the Implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

Ex Corde Ecclesiae, which means "from the heart of the church," is the Latin title of Pope John Paul II's 1990 apostolic con-

stitution on Catholic higher education. The document sets general norms for Catholic colleges and universities around the world, but leaves it up to bishops' conferences to make more specific applications in light of the situation in each country.

During the meeting this week the bishops were to vote on the proposed U.S. application, a document that has gone through a number of drafts during the eight-year existence of Bishop Leibrecht's committee.

In a preliminary presentation of the draft two days before the bishops were scheduled to vote on it, Bishop Leibrecht told them that the committee's current draft introduces greater flexibility in several norms that had been criticized in the prior draft.

He said provisions stating that Catholics should form the majority of faculty and of trustees for Catholic colleges and universities had been modified by adding "to the extent possible."

He said the bishops know the importance of the Catholic faculty and board members on Catholic institutions, but at the same time "we all know that our institutions have many very loyal people on their faculties and on their boards who are people of other faiths, but they support the vision of the Catholic institution, and we love them."

He said the committee also recognized that "some justifiable concerns" about the legal implications of certain norms.

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and
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for the Solemnity of
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