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Catechists

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On that note, the bishop also pointed out that catechists must not shy away from talking about the "crosses" of life lest they proclaim a "placebo" version of the Gospel. God not only created a world where war, physical disabilities and genocide exist, he did not spare his Son from being crucified in it. In the United States in particular, he noted, people have come to believe that life should be free of pain, yet bearing crosses are an inevitable part of the Christian journey.

At the same time, he said, catechists must also be rooted in the joy of the Gospel, a joy that hasn't always been apparent in recent years as the church has experienced conflict over its teachings, the fall-out from clergy sex scandals, and the decline of priestly and religious vocations.

"We have lost or, perhaps, never found, the Christian joy," he said. However, catechists must project the idea that they are delighted to share the Gospel.

Sharing the Gospel, he added, is the duty of clergy, religious and laity alike, all of whom are called by their baptism to serve the church. The growing role of the laity should not be seen as an effort to democratize the church or respond to declining vocations, but as the natural response of people to their baptismal call. He added that the church's lay catechists need to be aware that they must be replaced someday, and should encourage members of the younger generation to consider becoming catechists.

Just as the church needs its younger members, it also needs all of its members who don't always see eye-to-eye on issues, he said. The Catholic Church includes people who watch Mother Angelica on cable television, and people who believe that more attention needs to be paid to ecological issues. Devotees of Marian apparitions are Catholics as well as members of liberal reform groups like Call to Action.

"We cannot afford to write off any group or movement," he said. "No individual or group within the church has a monopoly on the truth." On that note, he said, Catholics should avoid labeling anyone disloyal to the church or impugn their motives simply because they hold an opposing position.

He added that catechists must be firmly rooted in prayer if they are to blossom as the church's teachers.

"It is only in prayer that we can touch base with the Lord," he said. "The quicker we learn this, the more fruitful our ministry will be."

Challenges

Bishop Hubbard's listeners heard him outline four challenges that he believed the church's workers and leaders had to confront in the years ahead.

Nuclear

Continued from page 1

Raymond A. Lucker of New Ulm, Minn.; and Walter F. Sullivan of Richmond, Va.

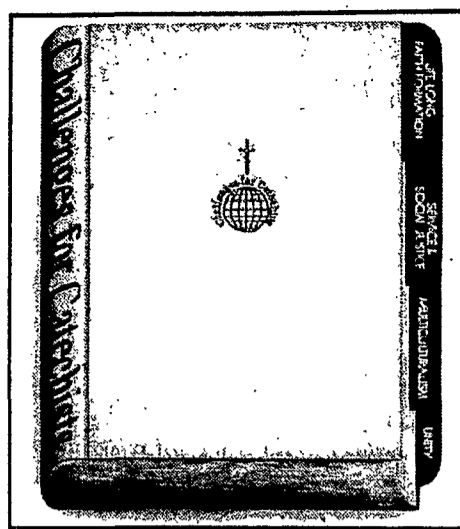
Also speaking at the press conference, were Howard W. Hallman, chairman of Methodists United for Peace and Justice and Bishop C. Dale White, who in 1986 chaired "In Defense of Creation," a churchwide study-action mobilization sponsored by the United Methodist Council of Bishops against the nuclear arms buildup.

Bishop White said that since 1986 every General Conference of the United Methodist Church has reaffirmed the bishops' "clear and unconditional no" to any use of nuclear weapons.

Hallman said the questionnaire by the religious leaders included a number of specific policy questions on which the candidates had already stated their views to some extent.

But he highlighted three questions which he said "deal with deeper issues that the candidates haven't so far discussed":

- The morality of the possession, threat



First, he said, catechists need to impart and help people study the social teachings of the church that advocate hands-on service to others as well as advocacy for social justice. Secondly, he said, the church by the middle of the 21st century in the United States will have larger numbers of Hispanics, Asians and African-Americans as members.

"That will mean we have to alter our European-American lens in which we perceive reality and see it," he said.

Promoting unity and diversity constitutes the third challenge, Bishop Hubbard said. The church's leaders and catechists must be "taking the lead in combating the incivility that unfortunately afflicts so much of our public discussion today." On this note, Catholics must continue to promote ecumenism, he said, and work with other non-Catholic congregations to foster unity.

The final challenge is to promote lifelong faith formation into adulthood, and not just focus catechetical efforts on children and teenagers. He added that the Rochester Diocese has been at the forefront of the nation's dioceses in meeting all of these challenges, but added that they still bear study and work.

Bishop Hubbard summed up his presentation by noting that the Eucharist is the center of the church's life, and that despite the many forms of liturgy, they all center on it as the inspiration for service to others. Christ being broken for others in the bread should be the example catechists follow in giving themselves to others.

"It is in the Eucharist that we gain fresh insights into who we are to be."

Scott J. Rutan, the diocese's new coordinator of Catechetical Programs and Services, noted later, "So many people talk about the catechetical ministry. He shared his catechetical ministry."

"I think people walked away feeling very supported, very encouraged and feeling they can do it, as well as feeling challenged. I think Bishop Hubbard really set an agenda for the year."

The diocese will observe the 65th anniversary of Catechetical Sunday on Sept. 17.

to use and actual use of nuclear weapons.

- The status of the country's "legal obligation" under the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to carry out its commitment under that treaty to the elimination of nuclear arsenals.

- The candidates' views of "the military utility of nuclear weapons."

The religious leaders announced that the complete results of the survey of candidates are available on the Internet at www.umc-gbcs.org/whatsnew.htm.

Asked what the candidates' responses on nuclear issues would mean to him as a voter this November, Bishop Gumbleton said in light of his view that the nuclear question is the most important moral issue facing the world today, "I think it has to be one of the most significant criteria that anyone would use in trying to decide how to vote."

"Certainly on the basis of the responses that I've seen from these three candidates, I would unhesitatingly vote for Mr. Nader and would not feel that I was throwing my vote away," he added. "It's the only way for us to show that somehow there has to be a dramatic change in the direction of the United States" on that issue.

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