

WORLD & NATION



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Republican presidential candidate Texas Gov. George W. Bush (left) and Democratic presidential candidate Vice President Al Gore (right) laugh with New York Archbishop Edward M. Egan during the annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner in New York Oct. 19.

Archdiocese hosts candidates' roast

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Diners who paid \$800 a plate to attend the Al Smith Dinner in New York Oct. 19 got their money's worth as presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush roasted each other and poked fun at themselves and most everything else on the political horizon.

"Whoever is writing your material, don't lose him," New York Archbishop Edward M. Egan pleaded in a concluding word.

Alfred E. Smith IV, great-grandson of the New York governor for whom the dinner sponsored by the New York Archdiocese is named, took his usual role as master of ceremonies, and got the program off to a rollicking start.

"To avoid confusion with the debates, we have asked the candidates to speak one at a time," he said.

Vice President Gore went first and joked that he was actually the one who invented the Al Smith Dinner.

Held in the grand ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the event this year drew 1,300 people and, supplemented by larger gifts by some corporations and individuals, raised \$1.6 million.

The dinner was started in 1945 by Cardinal Francis J. Spellman, who enlisted national political leaders and other prominent figures as speakers to attract ticket buyers. The Smith Foundation allocates the proceeds to various health care programs of the New York Archdiocese.

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Gore, whose wife Tipper did not attend, went on to deny allegations that he suffered from a tendency to exaggerate, and invited any doubters to check with his wife or any one of their 11 daughters.

Texas Gov. Bush's wife, Laura, did attend and was present and seated on the dais. Her husband credited her with giving him good advice.

He acknowledged feeling a little ill at ease going to speak at such a prestigious event where dais personalities appeared in white tie. But he said his wife advised him, "Don't try to be charming or witty or debonair. Just be yourself."

A five-tiered dais was filled with prominent leaders of government, business and public affairs, including New York Sen. Charles E. Schumer, Gov. George E. Pataki and New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani.

Acknowledging the group, Bush said they were known as "the top 1 percent."

"Some call you the elite," he said. "I call you my base."

The dais also included the two main candidates to succeed New York Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan — first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.S. Rep. Rick Lazio.

Gore noted that he liked to weave the stories of ordinary people into his presentations, and said there was a woman present at the dinner whose husband was losing his job and whose family would be put out of public housing.

"Hillary Clinton, I want to fight for

you," he said.

Bush alluded to reports that a highly paid consultant had advised Gore to wear more earth tones. The governor expressed astonishment that a grown man would pay so much to be told how to dress when that was enough money to "get you a sleeper in the Lincoln bedroom."

Alluding to columnist and editor William F. Buckley, also seated on the dais, Bush said that as fellow Yale men they had much in common.

"Bill wrote a book at Yale; I read one," he said. "He founded a conservative party; I started a few parties myself."

He also said that Buckley had won every debate he had been in, and remarked, "I know how he feels."

Each speaker included words of praise for Al Smith, the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for president in 1928.

Gore said Smith was his favorite kind of governor — "the kind who ran for president and lost."

In his remarks on Smith, Bush said he took comfort in the fact that a man named Al had been defeated.

Gore said Smith had favored such policies as the 45-cent minimum wage, six-day work week and building a bridge to the 1930s, and he commended Bush for running on Smith's agenda.

He concluded by pledging: "If I am entrusted with the presidency, I may not always be the funniest guy around, but I will never sigh to you."

Bush concluded his address with a serious tribute to the late Cardinal John J. O'Connor for his support of workers, immigrants and the unborn.

"He took a high office and lifted it up," Bush said. "Where the world wanted compromise, there was steel."

Cardinal O'Connor put politicians "on the spot," and that is "exactly where we ought to be," Bush said.

Pope thanks missionaries

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II wrapped up a weeklong jubilee focusing on evangelization with a call to announce Christ in a spirit of service and respect for others.

Celebrating Mass with thousands of Catholic missionaries at the Vatican Oct. 22, World Mission Sunday, the pope prayed for a more vigorous evangelization program in the third millennium. But he said missionary efforts must reflect Christ's spirit of humility.

"The words of Christ trace a clear line of division between the spirit of domination and that of service. For a disciple of Christ, the first thing is to be the servant of all," he said in a sermon.

At the same time, the pope offered heartfelt words of support to missionaries who risk their lives daily on the front lines of evangelization.

Missionaries from more than 120 countries attended the two-hour liturgy in St. Peter's Square, where they brought baskets bearing the earth of five continents, symbolizing Christ's mandate to evangelize all nations.

In the days leading up to Mission Sunday, an international conference in Rome examined the direction of evangelization, with particular emphasis on the need to announce Christ as the unique savior for all peoples.

The discussion came in the wake of a controversial Vatican document on salvation, *Dominus Iesus*, which warned of a new "religious pluralism" that sees all religions as valid paths to salvation.

Addressing some 1,200 mission experts at Rome's Urbanian University Oct. 17, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, head of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, said the church did not want to dismiss the importance of other religions, which are "vital for understanding the Christian faith fully."

But he said *Dominus Iesus* was a warning to theologians who have abandoned "any pretext of superiority of Christianity."

Bishop Walter Kasper, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, told the same conference that the church's insistence on Christ as the unique and universal savior must not be viewed as "imperialism" toward other religions.

He said the church must take its cue from Christ, who came "not to lord it over others" but to offer self-giving service.

Understood in this way, the claim of the unity and oneness of the Christian order of salvation is no imperialistic thesis that dominates or oppresses other religions," he said.

Bishop Kasper said the church teaches that non-Christians can indeed be saved. Today, the idea that "all those who do not know and acknowledge the Christian faith are forever lost" seems impossible to reconcile with God's mercy or his desire for the salvation of all, he said.

Several missionaries at the conference said they considered the Vatican's statements — including *Dominus Iesus* — doctrinally correct but of little practical use. On every continent, they said, non-Christians are brought to the Gospel more by witness and gentle invitation than by theological argument. Others said aggressive statements about Christianity as the only true religion would actually hurt their evangelization work.

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