

WORLD & NATION

Architecture views aired

By Tanya Connor
Catholic News Service

WORCESTER, Mass — What should a Catholic church look like?

Views are sharply divided. Behind the disagreement is the bigger question: How does what you believe about God, people and worship affect your choice of church design?

Catholics with differing views gathered Jan. 26-28 at Holy Cross College in Worcester. They included bishops, theologians, architects and liturgists.

The gathering was the second of a two-part meeting sponsored by the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, said organizer Paul Covino. Covino is a Common Ground committee member and associate chaplain and director of liturgy at the Jesuit-run college.

The Common Ground Initiative was founded by the late Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago to bring Catholics together to discuss their disagreements on church issues. Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb of Mobile, Ala., now chairs it.

The first segment of the meeting on church design was held last November in Mundelein, Ill. It came after the U.S. bishops Nov. 16 approved new guidelines on art and architecture for places of worship.

The guidelines, titled "Built of Living Stones," are the first to be issued by the body of bishops on building or renovating churches since the Second Vatican Council. They replace "Environment and Art in Catholic Worship," issued in 1978 by the bishops' Committee on the Liturgy.

The 27 invited participants at the Worcester meeting did not come to dissent or debate church regulations, Covino said. They came to discuss and understand the differences in their interpreta-

tion and aid the church's reflections, he added.

The group has no official authority and produced no statement, but some of participants' reflections will be published in a newsletter, said Covino.

Sister Catherine Patten, a member of the Sacred Heart of Mary and coordinator of Common Ground, said that the meeting gathered people who might not normally meet because they disagree.

"I think it changes how you view one another," she said. "You can't just write off someone when you've respectfully heard them out."

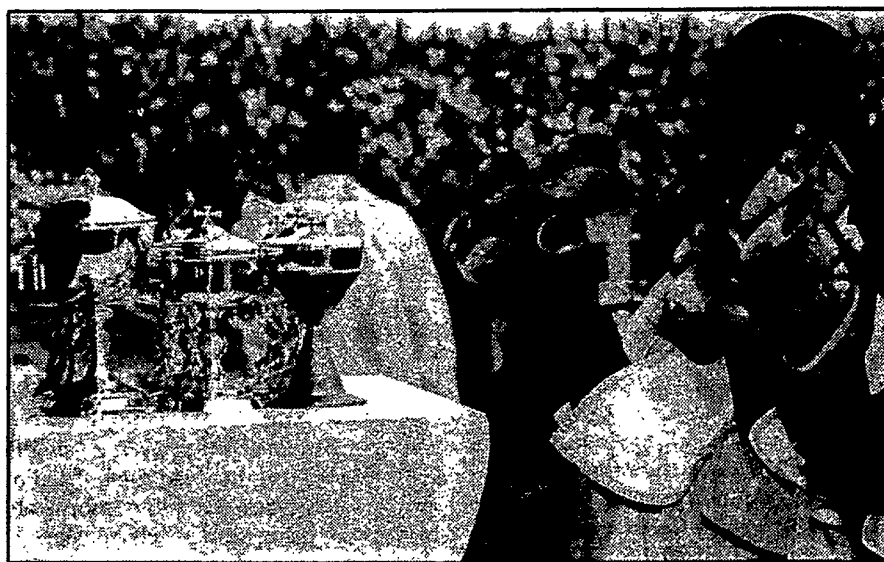
People respectfully hearing out those in disagreement was not Christine Reinhard's experience in Michigan.

She told *The Catholic Free Press*, newspaper of the Worcester Diocese, that in 1999 she received a death threat "posted in five places in the church" because "we were exploring the possibilities of taking out a Communion rail and bringing the altar table forward and installing an adult immersion baptismal font."

Reinhard, a liturgical design consultant, said the changes fell within the church's guidelines.

Msgr. Philip J. Murnion, director of the National Pastoral Life Center in New York, which oversees the Common Ground Initiative, asked whether there is a need to critique some things done in the name of reform after Vatican II. He said that with critiques there is a danger of an "us vs. them" mentality.

"There can be shifting elites in the church," he said, explaining that a certain group dominates, then those who were the minority become the elite. But most Catholics do not follow either group and are just trying to worship and find support from their faith, he said.



Marco Longari/CNS

Centennial in Rwanda

Altar servers ring bells during the consecration at a Mass marking the 100th year of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. Catholics gathered for the celebration Feb. 8 at a sports stadium in Kigali, capital of the central African nation.

Dioceses shun NCEA program

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Citing objections to programming at the upcoming National Catholic Educational Association convention, officials of the dioceses of Peoria, Ill., and Pittsburgh said they will not allocate diocesan funds to pay for teachers to attend the convention.

The dioceses also said educators who decide to attend the April 17-20 convention in Milwaukee on their own will not receive continuing educational credit usually available to them for participating.

Msgr. Steven Rohlf, Peoria's vicar general and chancellor, told *The Catholic Post*, Peoria's diocesan newspaper, that Bishop John J. Myers objected to the scheduling of Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister as a keynote speaker.

Sister Chittister is a well-known spiritual writer and lecturer. Many of her talks

and published works are critical of church teaching on the ordination of women, homosexuality and other issues, and Msgr. Rohlf described her as a "dissenter" from church authority.

In an October memo to his staff, Father Kris Stubna, education secretary for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, stated that "several objectionable speakers" were slated for the NCEA convention, "most notably Sister Joan Chittister." He sent a memo Nov. 22 to school and catechetical staff advising that diocesan staff will not attend.


Father Stubna told Catholic News Service Feb. 2 that diocesan officials reviewed the program for the NCEA convention "as they would any program of formation to see if it follows our guidelines, and this program simply did not."

But "no one has been barred from going" to the convention on their own, said the priest, referring to reports that teachers would not be allowed to attend.

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