

# Black convert to lead U.S. bishops

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops elected Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., as president on a single ballot Nov. 13. Bishop Gregory, 53, vice president for the past three years, is the first African-American and the first Catholic convert in history to be elected president of the U.S. bishops' conference.

The bishops also elected Bishop William S. Skylstad, 67, of Spokane, Wash., as vice president and Archbishop James P. Kelleher of Kansas City, Kan., as treasurer-elect. The election also marked the first time the bishops had used electronic devices to cast their votes.

The new president holds a doctorate in liturgy from Rome's Pontifical Liturgical Institute and has written extensively on

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the subject, particularly on liturgy in the African-American community.

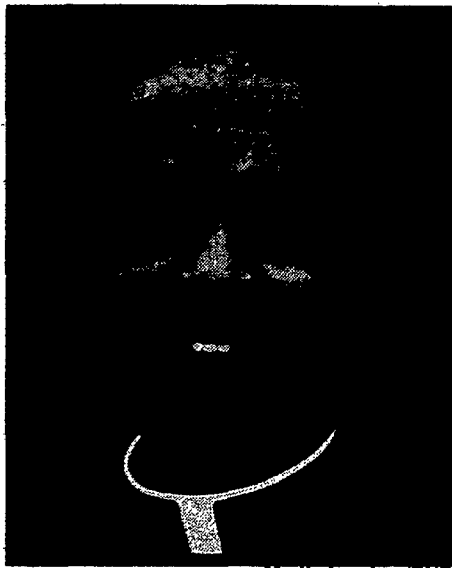
Bishop Gregory is chairman of the bishops' Committee on Personnel and vice chairman of three others: the Committee on Priorities and Plans, the Executive Committee and the Committee on Nomination of Conference Officers. He also is a member of the Administrative Committee and the ad hoc Committee on Publishing and Promotion Services.

He was born Dec. 7, 1947, in Chicago. It was just a few weeks after he enrolled as

a sixth-grader at St. Carthage School that Wilton Gregory decided he wanted to become a priest. He first had to become a Catholic, however, which he did by the end of the school year.

Two years after becoming a Catholic, he entered Chicago's Quigley Preparatory, a high school seminary. By the time he was 25, he was ordained a priest. Just 10 years later, he became the youngest bishop in the country. He was installed as an auxiliary bishop for Chicago a few days after his 36th birthday in 1983.

The election was held during the bishops' Nov. 12-15 fall general meeting, their first as the USCCB, operating under new statutes calling for all officers and chairmen to be elected a year in advance of taking office.



Martin Luaders/CNS  
Bishop Wilton D. Gregory is the first African-American to be elected USCCB president.

# Catholic Courier

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## Old Catholics run gamut



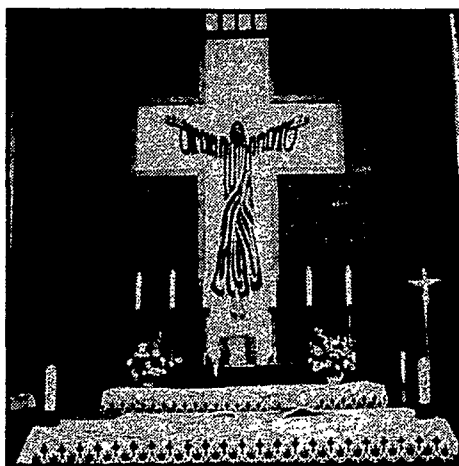
Pat Mott photo courtesy of the Orange County Catholic

Bishop Peter Hickman's St. Matthew Ecumenical Old Catholic Church is located in an Orange, Calif., shopping center.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** *Second in a two-part series.*

Those not familiar with the term "Old Catholic" may imagine a group with a long-standing, close relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. Yet in defining the federation of churches operating under this title, Roman Catholic officials caution that words should not be taken at face value.

In reality, Old Catholics split from the Catholic Church more than 100 years ago, principally over the issue of papal infallibility. Some modern derivatives of the Old Catholic movement



Karin von Volgländer/Photo intern  
The altar of Irondequoit's St. Casimir Polish National Catholic Church.

since have taken additional stances in opposition to Roman Catholic teaching on such issues as transubstantiation, the intercession of saints and the ordination of women.

On Nov. 17 in Rochester, Bishop Peter Hickman will ordain Mary Ramerman a priest of his Ecumenical and Old Catholic Faith Communities Diocese of Orange, Calif., one of numerous offshoots of the Old Catholic movement. Ramerman is a leader of Spiritus Christi, a schismatic group that includes many former members of Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Parish.

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STORY BY MARY LATONA

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