

# WORLD & NATION

## Austrian chaplain ministers to Olympic athletes

By Christopher Gunty  
Catholic News Service

PARK CITY, Utah — Salesian Father Bernhard Maier has attended the last 11 Olympic Games — winter and summer — but he has never competed for a medal.

The soft-spoken, gray-haired priest participates differently than the rest of the Austrian Olympic delegation, with which he travels — he is their chaplain.

For a predominantly Catholic country, the "chaplain for sport" has a great opportunity to make contact with athletes from all disciplines. For the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Utah, Father Maier is the spiritual companion for more than 100 competitors on the Austrian national team as well as about that many more coaches, doctors, trainers and officials.

He celebrated Mass Feb. 6 for the Alpine skiers, whose downhill and slalom races were being conducted at Snow Basin Ski Area in Huntsville. Then on Feb. 9 and 10 he celebrated more Masses for those athletes housed in the Olympic Village in Salt Lake City.

He spent Ash Wednesday Feb. 13 in Park City where he could visit those involved in luge, bobsledding and skeleton (all of which use the same course), ski jumping and snowboarding. He also planned to head for Provo, where several ice hockey matches were to be held.

"I visit. I look for contact with the athletes," Father Maier said. "It's very im-



Christopher Gunty/CNS

**Salesian Father Bernhard Maier, chaplain of the Austrian national Olympic team, distributes ashes at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Park City, Utah, Feb. 13. Father Maier travels with Austrian athletes, coaches and officials and has been the country's "chaplain for sport" for nearly 20 years.**

portant to invite them to Eucharist."

Sports chaplain is not, however, Father Maier's primary job. He also is principal of a school for 550 students from ages 10 to 18. "All the free time I have from this main job, I work with athletes," he said.

Early in his training, his superiors in the Salesian order gave him the task of studying both sport sciences and theology. With that background, he teaches

about the ethics of sport at many of the sport schools in Austria, especially in coach formation programs.

Fairness, Father Maier emphasized, "is a central virtue to sport," and the topic should be taught to all involved in the activities.

Teaching in sport schools became the bridge to the chaplaincy. About 20 years ago, the existing chaplain died and the

Austrian bishops approached the Salesian order to ask that Father Maier be assigned as the next chaplain.

Unlike Olympic Games, which now occur in either winter or summer only every other year, Father Maier's presence in Austria's sports world is ongoing. He attends matches and serves on the country's Olympic committee.

Since he has been chaplain for nearly 20 years, athletes, coaches and officials "all know me," he said. "It has been wonderful to marry the athletes and baptize their children." He often visits athletes who have been injured.

Unfortunately, he also has buried 20 or more from the sport community, including some killed in sporting accidents. "That's also part of the job — to be with them in the sadness," Father Maier said.

He began his Olympic tour of duty in 1984 for the Winter Games in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, and the Summer Games in Los Angeles. He hopes to still be chaplain four years from now so that he can attend the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy.

As a member of the Salesians — the order founded by St. John Bosco — and headmaster of a school named for him, Father Maier looks forward to seeing the Olympics in Turin, where the saint helped build the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and where Don Bosco is buried.

"It would be wonderful," he said. "As a Salesian, it would be — how do you say it? — a high point in my life."

## Fourteen priests accused of sexually abusing minors

MANCHESTER, N.H. (CNS) — Saying no priest who has sexually abused a minor can be placed in active ministry, Bishop John B. McCormack of Manchester announced Feb. 15 that he has put one parish priest on leave and has barred six retired or sick priests from all ministry because of "credible allegations" against them.

The bishop also released the names of seven suspended or retired priests who have been banned from active ministry since the time of sexual abuse allegations against them. He said the alleged occurrences date from 1963-87, but he did not release specific dates or details.

Bishop McCormack — who also chairs the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse — was the third New England bishop in two weeks to follow the lead of Boston's Cardinal Bernard F. Law in tightening up diocesan rules against priests accused of having sexually abused minors.

His action was part of a new zero-tolerance policy in Manchester regarding sexual misconduct with minors and a review of all priests accused of such misconduct.

In late January and early February, the Boston Archdiocese publicly removed two pastors and six other priests from active ministry, citing past allegations of sexual abuse against them. Those named included two priests who had been without an assignment since 1994 but were working in parish settings. The Boston Archdiocese also turned over to county prosecutors lists reportedly containing 87 names of priests whose personnel records showed allegations of sexual abuse of minors some time in the past 40 years or more.

On the weekend of Feb. 7-8, two priests in the Diocese of Portland, Maine, told their congregations of past allegations of sexual misconduct with teen-agers. Portland's Bishop Joseph J. Gerry said they were the only priests in the diocese against whom such allegations had been made, and their public admissions were part of a new diocesan policy of openness.

The same weekend Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of Worcester, Mass., sent a letter to all parishes announcing that, like Boston,

the Worcester Diocese was updating its policies on sexual abuse and the reporting of abuse to authorities. The diocese will require immediate reporting to state authorities of any allegation of abuse of a minor, even though current state law does not require such reporting from all church personnel.

At a press conference announcing the new policy in Manchester, Bishop McCormack said that, contrary to past advice allowing some priests who had abused minors to return to ministry, "it is now clear to me that any credible allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor by a priest means that he cannot return to pastoral ministry."

"What I report is sad in one way because it is about sin, sickness and crime," he said, "and yet in another way it is hopeful in that our church and community will know that no priest is now serving in ministry who has to our knowledge engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor."

He explained that the action was taken after reviewing files to see if any priests who had been accused of such misconduct might still be in a position to put children at risk.

"Our goal," he said, "is to protect our children and to strengthen and restore the trust of people in the church."

The active priest who was removed was Father John R. Poirier, administrator of Holy Family Parish in Gorham.

Five who had their permission to celebrate Mass revoked were retired: Fathers Albert L. Boulanger, Gerard F. Chalifour, Robert J. Densmore and Raymond H. Laferriere, all of Manchester, and Father Romeo J. Valliere of Berlin. Father Conrad V. LaForest of Winnesquam, who is on sick leave, is also barred from celebrating Mass.

Of the seven priests who have been removed from ministry since the time of the allegations against them, three are suspended and four are retired. The sus-

pended priests are Fathers Paul L. Aube and Francis Talbot of Manchester and Steven Scruton of Dover. The retired priests are Fathers Eugene Pelletier of Manchester, Albion F. Bulger of Nashua, Joseph A. Cote of Berlin and Joseph T. Maguire of Hyannis, Mass.

Father Edward J. Arsenault, chancellor, has been representing the bishop in discussions with the state attorney general's office regarding child protection and mandatory reporting in New Hampshire. Father Arsenault said the diocese always has complied with the state's child safety and mandatory reporting laws. The names of the 14 priests were given to the attorney general.

Bishop McCormack said, "People wonder not only what has the church in New Hampshire done about handling sexual misconduct by priests and other pastoral staff in the past, but also what is it doing to make parishes and schools safe for children in the future."

## Justice's euthanasia comment not necessarily support

By Ed Langlois  
Catholic News Service

PORTLAND, Ore. — Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's comments about physician-assisted suicide do not necessarily mean he would side with Oregon in a federal case related to the controversial issue, say opponents of the law.

In a Feb. 11 speech at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Scalia said Oregon voters, not the federal government, should decide the legality of physician-assisted suicide in the state.

"You don't hear me complaining about Oregon's law," the justice added, responding to people in the audience who shouted that Oregon had twice approved the law that allows doctors to give lethal prescriptions requested by terminally ill patients.

But foes of the law say the legality of assisted suicide is a distinct issue from the case pending in U.S. District Court in Oregon, which may be bound for the Supreme Court.

That case raises the question of

whether the Oregon law allowing lethal prescriptions or the federal law restricting the use of pharmaceuticals for "legitimate medical purposes" should prevail. It was filed in November by Oregon against the U.S. Department of Justice.

"He has no problem with Oregon having the law. Fine," said Dr. Gregory Hamilton, spokesman for Physicians for Compassionate Care. "The issue is not whether Oregon can pass laws so that doctors can give assisted suicide to their patients. The issue is whether Oregon can exempt itself from federal drug law."

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in 1996 that assisted suicide is not a constitutional right. But the justices stopped short of ruling assisted suicide unconstitutional.

That decision came down in favor of state laws in New York and Washington that ban assisted suicide.

An aide to Scalia said Feb. 12 that no one in his office could clarify the justice's comments and that Scalia himself was not likely to say more.

"I am surprised that as a justice he would be commenting on an issue that

might end up before the court," said Robert Castagna, executive director of the Oregon Catholic Conference. "I am hoping that what he said informally in his talk is different from his legal judgment."

Richard Doerflinger, associate director for policy development at the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, said he interprets Scalia's remarks as meaning the issue of assisted suicide is up to lawmakers and voters, rather than the Supreme Court.

"If anything, his message was that people should not try to make the courts resolve all these issues — which, of course, is exactly what the state of Oregon is currently doing by suing the federal government," he added.

In early February, Scalia surprised many people by saying that Catholic judges who accept the church's teachings against capital punishment should resign. Scalia said three years ago that abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide were signs of a "culture of death." He favors overturning *Roe vs. Wade* and allowing states to decide on the legality of abortion.