

# WORLD & NATION

## Validity of gay priests' ordination questioned

More than a year ago, the Vatican began signaling concerns about homosexuality and the priesthood.

Now, in comments made to media during the past week, Vatican spokesman Joachin Navarro-Valls has questioned whether the ordinations of gay priests are valid.

On Feb. 6, 2001, Catholic News Service reported that the secretary for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith considered it "self-evident" that seminarians should refuse to admit men with a strong homosexual temptation.

In a written statement provided to CNS, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone said, "It cannot be denied that when homosexuality becomes widespread or acceptable in a certain cultural or geographical region, this can have negative effects even within the priesthood."

Although the homosexual inclination is not sinful in itself, the archbishop said, it "evokes moral concern" because it is a strong temptation to actions that "are always in themselves evil."

The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" calls the homosexual inclination "objectively disordered." Expanding on that, Arch-

bishop Bertone said he would define the homosexual inclination as "a temptation that, for whatever reason, has become so predominant in a person's life as to become a force shaping the entire outlook of the person."

"Persons with homosexual inclination should not be admitted to the seminary," the archbishop said.

According to reports published in the wake of pedophilia scandals in Boston, Navarro-Valls agrees.

In an interview published in the *New York Times* March 3, Navarro-Valls said "people

with these inclinations just cannot be ordained." He also suggested that just as a marriage can be annulled if the husband turns out to be gay, so the ordination of gay men might also be made invalid.

"That does not imply a final judgment on people with homosexuality," Navarro-Valls told *The Times*. "But you cannot be in this field."

The *Boston Globe* meanwhile reported research suggesting that a large portion of Catholic priests are gay, and experts' warnings that any effort to bar homosexuals would lead to a dramatic reduction in the

number of U.S. priests.

"If they were to eliminate all those who were homosexually oriented, the number would be so staggering that it would be like an atomic bomb; it would do the same damage to the church's operation," A.W. Richard Sipe, a former priest and psychotherapist, told the *Globe*.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Catholic News Service* is following this story in Rome and had obtained an interview with Navarro-Valls just as the *Catholic Courier* was going to press. We anticipate a report of greater depth next week.

## Pope, cardinals approve canonization of 9 new saints

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II and cardinals gathered at the Vatican formally approved the canonization of nine new saints, including Mexico's Juan Diego, Father Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei, and Italian Capuchin Padre Pio.

During a Feb. 26 ceremony at the Vatican, the pope announced the canonization dates for the three men as well as for six other priests and religious.

Blessed Juan Diego will be canonized Ju-

ly 30 in Mexico City, the pope announced.

The pope, who will be in Toronto July 23-28 for World Youth Day, will fly to Mexico for Blessed Juan Diego's canonization, then on to Guatemala for the July 31 canonization of Blessed Pedro de San Jose de Betancur, the Vatican announced.

Pope John Paul also announced that Blessed Padre Pio would be canonized June 16 and that the ceremony for the declaration of St. Josemaria Escriva would be Oct. 6.

The five others will be canonized together May 19 at the Vatican. They are:

- Blessed Alonso de Orozco, a Spaniard who died in 1591 and was beatified in 1882.
- Blessed Ignazio da Santhia, who died in 1770.
- Blessed Umile da Bisignano, who died in 1637 and was beatified in 1882.
- Blessed Paulina do Coracao Agonizante de Jesus. She died in 1942.
- Blessed Benedetta Cambiagio Frassinello, who died in 1858.

## Congress targets eight key issues

CHICAGO (CNS) — Chicago's black Catholic community is gathering ideas, offering prayers and celebrating hopes as it prepares to host the National Black Catholic Congress in late summer.

"We are proud to be the host of the ninth congress," said Auxiliary Bishop Joseph N. Perry. The last time Chicago hosted the congress was in 1893.

A day of reflection Feb. 17 at Hales Franciscan High School in Chicago gave a mostly African-American audience of about 80 people the opportunity to collect final feedback on eight issues the congress will consider when it convenes Aug. 29-Sept. 1.

Bishop Perry said he hopes the congress will advance a "holistic approach" to produce action plans for "everything that is truly black and authentically Catholic."

Among those preparing to travel to Chicago with a delegation drawn from parishes across the Diocese of Nashville, Tenn., was Father Ferd Cheri of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Nashville.

"The black congress is an opportunity for all of us to come together to tell stories — our story," he said in an interview with the *Tennessee Register*, Nashville's diocesan newspaper.

Father Cheri, who heads the liturgy committee for the national gathering, said the congress is meant to serve as a model for dioceses throughout the United States to better deal with issues that are unique to the black Catholic community and to strengthen the Catholic Church in the process.

"The congress addresses how we treat brothers and sisters as we celebrate how God created us in his image — along with other brothers and sisters — whether Native American, Hispanic, Korean, whatever we are," he said. "We bring not only our language, but our spirit, and that's the thing that makes us unique."

Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)  
 Vol. 113 No. 21, March 7, 2002

Published weekly except the first Thursday in January and the last Thursday in December. Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624, 585/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, PO Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624.

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