

# USCCB to discuss more than abuse

Jerry Filteau/CNS

WASHINGTON — When the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops meets in Washington Nov. 11-14, it will face decisions on sexual-abuse norms and liturgy and proposed statements on domestic and international poverty, migration, abortion, domestic violence, stewardship and Hispanic ministry.

The nation's bishops also will be asked to approve norms for church fundraising and church property sales and leases, proposed new statutes for the International Commission on the Liturgy, a \$53.1 million national budget for 2003 and an updated handbook on handling diocesan finances.

Less than two weeks before the meeting, a special commission of Vatican and U.S. cardinals and bishops met in Rome to work out revisions in the canonical sexual-abuse norms the U.S. bishops approved last June in Dallas when they adopted a national "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

More than 250 bishops and more than 200 members of the media are expected to attend the USCCB meeting in Washington's Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill.

As in June, intense media scrutiny will accompany the bishops' debates on dealing with clergy who have sexually abused minors.

Unlike Dallas, where virtually everything else was pushed off the agenda to deal with the sex-abuse issue and major new policy decisions were made, the meeting in Washington will handle a much broader agenda.

Less time will be devoted to the sex-abuse issue in Washington, and the new decisions in that area will be more in the line of what the USCCB president, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., has called "fine-tuning" the Dallas policy, not rewriting it.

Other statements or documents the U.S. bishops will be asked to approve Nov. 11-14 include:

- Their first joint pastoral letter with the Mexican bishops on migration, titled "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope"; the Mexican bishops are to vote on the document at a meeting in Mexico the same week.

- A pastoral reflection on poverty at home and abroad — "A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and Respect the Dignity of All God's Children" — which describes the commitment to overcome poverty as "a religious duty and moral imperative."

- An English translation, with U.S. adaptations, of the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal issued by the Vatican in 2000.

- An English translation of Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests and of Deacons.

- New statutes for the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, a body formed by English-speaking bishops' conferences during the Second Vatican Council to help develop uniform English-language liturgical texts for use around the world.

- "Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry," a 45-page pastoral statement updating the bishops' comprehensive 1987 pastoral plan for ministry among Hispanics — who now make up about 40 percent of the U.S. Catholic population.

- A brief statement, "A Matter of the Heart," marking the 30th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court abortion decisions with an overview of the effects of those decisions, including indications in recent polls that more Americans, especially those born since 1973, are coming to oppose abortion on demand.

- "When I Call for Help," a pastoral statement responding to domestic violence against women. An updated version of a document of the same name published jointly in 1992 by the bishops' committees on women and on marriage and family, the revision is being brought to the whole body of bishops for approval; more than 240,000 copies of the committees' statement have been sold.

- A new preface to accompany a 10th anniversary edition of the bishops' 1992 pastoral letter, "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response."

- A \$53.1 million national USCCB budget for 2003 and a 3.5 percent increase in diocesan assessments for national operations in 2004.

- A set of U.S. norms on Catholic fund raising spelling out principles of accountability and rules of reporting, oversight, official approval and use of the funds when dioceses, parishes or other Catholic entities appeal to Catholics for financial support.



Reuters/CNS

## All Souls feast marked

A Guatemalan family visits a gravesite at the colorful Santo Tomas cemetery in Chichicastenango, located west of Guatemala City, Nov. 2. The community marked the feast of All Souls, locally known as the Day of the Dead, with a celebration of mixed Mayan and Christian traditions.

## Vatican prepares text on gay priest candidates

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican press office confirmed that the Vatican is preparing a document on the admission of homosexual candidates to the priesthood.

The document is in the early stages of preparation and is not expected to be published before the end of the year, a press office official said Nov. 5.

The document is expected to look at other issues regarding admission to the priesthood as well as homosexuality, the official said.

Catholic News Service, citing informed sources, reported Oct. 8 that the Vatican had prepared a draft document containing directives against the admission of homosexuals to the priesthood.

At that time, the sources told CNS that the draft document maintained that since the church considers the

homosexual orientation as "objectively disordered" such people should not be admitted to the seminary or ordained.

The question of excluding homosexuals from the priesthood had been quietly considered at the Vatican for years without finding a consensus. It received new and more urgent attention in the wake of U.S. clerical sex-abuse cases, many of which involved homosexual acts.

The Congregation for Catholic Education prepared the draft document in collaboration with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and other Vatican agencies, the sources said. The draft was being circulated for comment in October among a wide range of consultants, including theologians, canon lawyers and other experts, they said.

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