

USCCB

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nal challenge and fraternal correction" of one another regarding their decisions on clergy sex abuse.

The norms and the charter call for removal from ministry of any priest or deacon who has sexually abused a minor. They also contain provisions for victim assistance, review boards at the diocesan and national levels, and cooperation with civil authorities.

In their statement on bishops' accountability, they apologized for past mistakes in dealing with sexually abusive priests and spelled out what they will do if a bishop engages in sexual misconduct.

"In particular, we acknowledge our mistakes in the past when some bishops have transferred, from one assignment to another, priests who had abused minors," they said. "We recognize our role in the suffering this has caused. We apologize for it."

But clergy sex abuse was far from the only topic before the bishops.

"Strangers No Longer," a pastoral letter on migration approved by the Mexican bishops Nov. 14, is one of the first statements to be issued jointly by two national bishops' conferences. It was approved by the U.S. bishops 243-1.

On other international issues, the bishops voted overwhelmingly to urge the United States to "step back from the brink of war" with Iraq, saying the current circumstances did not justify the use of military force.

"A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and Respect the Dignity of All God's Children," approved 241-1 with three abstentions, is "a call to action to how we serve the least of our brothers and sisters," said Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington.

Also added to the agenda was a letter expressing solidarity with the Colombian bishops following the kidnapping of Bishop Jorge Jimenez Carvajal of Zipaquirá, president of the Latin American bishops' council.

Most of the domestic issues before the bishops passed by wide margins with little — and in some cases, no — debate.

Approved in a 249-2 vote with one abstention, "When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women" is an updated version of a 10-year-old pamphlet-sized document, with new statistics that reflect the scope of domestic violence against women and updated information on resources available to help them.

In the abortion statement, intended to mark the 30th anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe vs. Wade*

decision in January, the bishops pledge to continue working to overturn the decision, "no matter how long it may take, no matter the sacrifices required."

The brief statement, titled "A Matter of the Heart," also promises assistance to anyone considering abortion and to "the broken-hearted" who still grieve past abortions. It was approved 250-0, with one abstention.

"Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry," which passed on a 254-1 vote, with one abstention, outlines a new program to strengthen ministry among the 25 million Hispanic Catholics who now make up about 40 percent of the U.S. Catholic population.

Among its recommendations are increasing the number of Hispanic clergy and the Spanish-speaking non-Hispanic clergy, doing more to prevent Hispanics from leaving the Catholic Church to join other religions, and improving educational resources to train Hispanics for church leadership positions.

In the area of liturgy, the bishops agreed to start a review process to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their 5-year-old Lectionary and approved for U.S. use two liturgical texts — the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests and of Deacons.

On stewardship, the bishops approved an updated preface for the 10th anniversary edition of their pastoral letter on stewardship and OK'd a pamphlet-size statement intended for young people on the principles of stewardship.

The bishops ratified new national norms for church fund raising and the sale or lease of church-owned property, as well as a lengthy new handbook on diocesan financial concerns.

They voted to authorize the bishops' Committee on Education to update a 1990 statement in support of Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

Also approved were a \$53.1 million USCCB budget for 2003; a 3.5 percent increase for 2004 in the assessment on dioceses to support the conference's work; 2003 plans for USCCB committees, offices and support units; goals and objectives for 2004-2006; and requests for budgetary exceptions in 2003.

The exceptions included more than \$3 million in spending from the bishops' General Reserve Fund for costs associated with the national Office for Child and Youth Protection, National Review Board and two studies mandated by the charter.

Contains reporting by Mike Latona in Rochester.

At a Glance

Brief look at action taken at the U.S. bishops' 2002 fall meeting



ABORTION

Pledged to continue work to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*

CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE

Approved revised norms for handling cases

Accepted slightly revised charter for protecting children

Apologized for past mistakes

Agreed to allocate \$3 million to national child protection office

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Reaffirmed that it is sinful and offered help to women

HISPANIC CATHOLICS

Approved new program to strengthen ministry

IRAQ

Urged United States to 'step back from the brink of war'

LITURGY

Approved General Instruction of Roman Missal

Approved rites of ordination for bishops, priests and deacons

Agreed to begin review of 5-year-old U.S. Lectionary

MIGRATION

Approved historic joint pastoral with bishops of Mexico

POVERTY

Recommitted church to service here and abroad

2003 BUDGET

Approved \$53 million for U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Source: CNS reports

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GENERAL

Announcements

ADOPTIONS The Catholic Courier does not publish adoption advertising. To obtain a list of agencies that serve birth mothers and adoptive parents, call 585-529-9530. Agencies wishing to be included on this list may send information to the Catholic Courier.

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