

# Pope asks EU to note Christian roots

Cindy Wooden/CNS

VATICAN CITY — The Christian roots of European culture must be recognized not only in the new constitution of the European Union, but first of all in the way European Christians live their lives, Pope John Paul II said.

"Europe needs to make a qualitative leap in becoming conscious of its spiritual heritage," the pope said in his apostolic exhortation, "Ecclesia in Europa" ("The Church in Europe").

The document, signed by the pope June 28 during an evening prayer service in St. Peter's Basilica, is the pope's response to the discussion and proposals of European bishops who met for a special continental synod in 1999.

The pope said the discussions highlighted "grave uncertainties at the levels of culture, anthropology, ethics and spirituality."

"Possibly the most urgent matter Europe faces, in both East and West, is a growing need for hope, a hope which will enable us to give meaning to life and history and to continue on our way together," he wrote.

The pope cited as signs of a lack of hope in many European countries a falling birthrate and widespread acceptance of abortion, declining church attendance, a lack of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, an increasing divorce rate, and



Reuters/CNS

**Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt reads the draft constitution for the European Union during the group's summit in Thessaloniki, Greece, June 20. European bishops have criticized the draft for failing to mention God and Christianity, and Pope John Paul II has appealed for the constitution to include a reference to Europe's Christian heritage.**

growing acceptance of euthanasia.

The truest source of hope for Europe and its residents, the pope said, comes from faith in Jesus Christ, who conquered sin and death, and from the Gospel, which teaches people the best way to live as individuals and in a community.

As the members of the European Union prepare for the formal review

of a draft constitution in October, the pope appealed again for an explicit "reference to the religious and, in particular, the Christian heritage of Europe."

"While fully respecting the secular nature" of European institutions, he said, they must allow for religious freedom, foster dialogue between religious communities and Euro-

pean structures, and guarantee that the juridical status of religions recognized in individual nations is not abrogated.

"In her relations with public authorities, the church is not calling for a return to the confessional state," the pope said. But the church also rejects attempts to create a "hostile separation between civil institutions and religious confessions."

At a June 28 Vatican press conference, Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Birmingham, England, said the European constitution must be honest in its description of the continent.

"No presentation of Europe can be honest if it fails to recognize the part already played, and still played, by Christianity in the shaping of Europe," he said. "To omit such matters is an act of ideology and is unworthy of the framers of such a historic document."

In his homily at the June 28 prayer service, the pope said, "The Good News was and continues to be the source of life for Europe."

"If it is true that Christianity cannot be reduced to a particular culture, but dialogues with all cultures to help them express the best of themselves in every area of knowledge and human action, Europe's Christian roots are the principal guarantee of its future," he said.

"Could a tree without roots live and grow? Europe, do not forget your history," he said.

## Corning school will consolidate two facilities

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Corning's All Saints Academy will vacate its Denison Parkway facility beginning next school year and operate exclusively out of its State Street building.

State Street will now become a grade pre-K through 8 school. Since 1994, State Street had accommodated grades 2-8 and Denison Parkway had housed grades pre-K through 1.

Rose Ann Ewanyk, principal, explained in a June 16 letter to parents that the projected All Saints enrollment for 2003-04 is 215 students, but that only 50 would have attended Denison Parkway.

"By the time you pay for a secretary, maintenance staff and utilities, it just doesn't seem reasonably prudent," Ewanyk told the *Catholic Courier*, adding that two teaching positions and some support-staff positions were eliminated in the

consolidation.

Ewanyk said the decision was made in early June by the All Saints School Committee, which is the equivalent of a board of directors.

Sister of St. Joseph Joan Cawley, pastoral administrator for All Saints Parish, said the consolidation will save at least \$55,000 per year. Dominican Sister Elizabeth Meegan, diocesan superintendent of schools, supported the move, saying, "Parents would be very grateful to have (students) in one building. It also allows us to keep tuition down as much as we can. It is a decision that would seem to benefit all sides."

The State Street building is located approximately six blocks from the Denison Parkway facility. Ewanyk noted that the State Street building offers sufficient space to accommodate grades pre-K through 1 as well as a moderate rise in students in future years.

This is not the first time that the

Denison Parkway building — formerly St. Patrick's School — has gone unused. The State Street building — formerly St. Mary's School — had been the sole site for several years prior to 1994, when a sharp jump in enrollment fueled the need for two Catholic school buildings again. Combined enrollment at that time exceeded 400.

Ewanyk does not foresee any similar upswing in the near future, however, citing low birth rates in Steuben County as well as the uprooting of numerous families in recent years due to work-force reductions at Corning Inc., the area's major employer.

"There just aren't the numbers we had 10 years ago," she said, adding that All Saints' lower grades are further affected by increased pre-K and kindergarten offerings from other agencies in the Corning area.

Sister Cawley said All Saints

Parish will attempt to sell the Denison Parkway school building. Also up for sale are a church building, convent and rectory that are located on the campus of the former St. Patrick's Church along with the school.

"Our (pastoral) planning group has been mandated to aggressively pursue some uses for the property. We don't have anything specific, but are open to receiving any offers," Sister Cawley said.

St. Patrick's Church was closed in the fall of 2001. The convent is now vacant following the departure of Family Counseling Services on June 1. Meanwhile, the rectory continues to house three social-service agencies: Corning Community Food Pantry, Southern Tier Health Ministry and Catholic Charities. Sister Cawley said she does not know if those agencies would be able to remain in the rectory if the buildings were sold.

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