

# USCCB takes action on varied issues

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. bishops opened their annual fall meeting with a challenge from their president to direct “the energy of the whole church” to the eradication of sexual abuse and the healing of its victims.

During general sessions the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops discussed and voted on an array of issues from same-sex unions, agricultural concerns, popular devotions, socially responsible investment, stewardship, conflict-of-interest policy and several liturgical matters.

On the first day of the annual fall meeting, held at Washington’s Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill, the bishops approved the addition of staff members for their Office for Child and Youth Protection at a cost of more than \$265,000 through 2005.

Failure to approve the new posts “would look like our institutional memory has been lost” on the abuse issue, said Coadjutor Bishop Joseph A. Galante of Dallas.

The bishops heard a presentation on the work of the National Review Board, formed last year in the wake of the clerical sex-abuse crisis; were told of major national studies on the crisis and of the bishops’ response to be released early next year.

On Nov. 12, the bishops approved, 234-3, a short teaching document on why same-sex unions should not be given the social or legal status of marriage. Rapid developments on the issue led the USCCB Administrative Committee in September to seek development of the statement in time for the November meeting.

“Between Man and Woman: Ques-



Bob Roller/CNS

**U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ president Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., and National Review Board interim chairwoman Justice Anne Burke answer questions during the USCCB general meeting in Washington.**

tions and Answers About Marriage and Same-Sex Union,” states that marriage between a man and a woman is God’s plan, seen in nature and in divine revelation.

They unanimously approved their first new document on agriculture in 14 years: “For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers.” The document examines issues from genetically modified crops to crop subsidies and market forces affecting rural life both in the United States and in its trading partners.

Also discussed was the need for guidelines on relationships with Catholics whose public actions are

not in accord with church teaching.

The guidelines are meant to help bishops make distinctions between “respect for the office and approval of the officeholder ... to distinguish between fundamental moral principles and prudential judgments on the application of those principles.”

General counsel Mark Chopko told the bishops that the church faces an affront to its integrity and identity

from regulatory and legislative pressures, including laws that require church-run social service agencies to include contraceptives in prescription-drug plans for employees.

He warned that if Catholic and other faiths’ agencies are confronted by the choice of conforming to some societal standards or withdrawing from society, they might have to stop serving the poor, the vulnerable and needy.

The bishops approved, 236-6, a pastoral statement encouraging popular devotions but cautioning that they should never supplant the liturgy.

They also approved:

- A stewardship document urging young adults to change the world by using their gifts and skills to embrace the church’s social teachings.

- A policy to prevent conflict of interest in conducting business and an updated version of their guidelines on socially responsible investing, by voice vote.

- A revision of “Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest” and a revised edition of “Guidelines for the Concelebration of the Eucharist.”

- A 2004 USCCB budget shaving \$4.5 million off the 2003 expenditures.

They heard of plans for their 2004 special assembly in Denver, which will involve discussions of a possible plenary council of the U.S. church

## HEALING RETREAT

Led by **Father Richard McAlear, OMI**

*Celebration of Eucharist*

*Prayers for Healing & Confession*



**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2003 AT 7:30 PM**

Celebration of Eucharist and Prayers for Healing

St. Louis Church • S. Main Street, Pittsford N.Y.

**CONTINUING SATURDAY, DEC. 13:**

“Christ Jesus within us” (St. Louis Parish Hall)

10:00-11:30 a.m. Teaching and Sharing

Noon lunch - Bring brown bag, dessert & beverages provided

1:30 -4:00 p.m. Teaching, Sharing and Prayer

4:30 p.m. Celebration of Eucharist in the Church

**Additional Liturgies**

All at 7:00 PM

**MONDAY, DEC. 8**

St. Mark’s Church

54 Kuhn Rd., Rochester, NY

**TUESDAY, DEC. 9**

St. Januarius Church

180 N. Main St, Naples, NY

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10**

St. Patrick’s Church,

46 Stanley St., Mt. Morris, NY

Books, videos cassettes

available for purchase



**All are welcome!**

**Registration Fee:**

**\$15.00 payable to:**

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