

Albany bishop denies claims

CONDEMNATION OF ANTI-SEMITISM NEEDED

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II, meeting with the American Jewish Committee, said the Second Vatican Council's condemnation of anti-Semitism was still urgently needed in today's world.

The pope also deplored what he called an "alarming trend" toward violence in the name of religion and said greater efforts at religious education were the key to promoting tolerance.

The pope spoke to members of the Jewish organization Feb. 5 in a private audience, and he received a litany of thanks for his leadership over the last 25 years in forging bonds of Catholic-Jewish friendship. In his brief talk to the group, the pope recalled the importance of the landmark Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, which denounced anti-Semitism and all discrimination based on race or religion.

MINICATECHISM TO BE REVIEWED BY CARDINALS

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican has completed a draft of a 150-page miniccatechism and is sending the text to cardinals and bishops' conferences for review, a Vatican source said.

Pope John Paul II commissioned the shorter, simpler version of the 865-page *Catechism of the Catholic Church* last year, and a 10-member commission has been working on the text since March. The source said Feb. 9 that over the next few months the commission would consider the input of cardinals and bishops' conferences, and that a final draft is expected to be completed later this year.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sun., Feb. 15: Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalms 114-4, 6; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; Luke 6:17, 20-26.

Mon., Feb. 16: James 1:1-11; Psalms 119:67-68, 71-72, 75-76; Mark 8:11-13.

Tue., Feb. 17: James 1:12-18; Psalms 94:12-15, 18-19; Mark 8:14-21.

Wed., Feb. 18: James 1:19-27; Psalms 15:2-5; Mark 8:22-26.

Thu., Feb. 19: James 2:1-9; Psalms 34:2-7; Mark 8:27-33.

Fri., Feb. 20: James 2:14-24, 26; Psalms 112:1-6; Mark 8:34-9:1.

Sat., Feb. 21: James 3:1-10; Psalms 12:2-5, 7-8; Mark 9:2-13.

ALBANY, N.Y. (CNS) — The day after Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany denied an allegation that he had sexual relations with a man more than 25 years ago, a second man claimed two sexual encounters with the bishop in the 1970s.

Bishop Hubbard denied that accusation as well and diocesan spokesman Father Kenneth J. Doyle said the bishop would fight both claims.

Albany attorney John Aretakis, who has filed several unsuccessful lawsuits against the diocese or its priests, accompanied both men at the press conferences where they made their allegations.

"I have never sexually abused anyone of any age. I have honored my vow of celibacy," Bishop Hubbard said at a Feb. 5 press conference following the first allegation.

"I stand before you today with a clear conscience," the bishop said. "There is absolutely no truth to the allegations that have been leveled against me."

Bishop Hubbard cut short a Florida vacation to return to the diocese following a Feb. 4 claim by a California man, Andrew Zalay, that his brother, Thomas, had written about an affair with the bishop before he committed suicide.

Thomas Zalay died in 1978, at the age of 25, after apparently setting himself afire in his parents' home.

Andrew Zalay showed reporters what he said was a handwritten, signed suicide note from his brother, which made no mention of the bishop but described dangerous, frightening feelings Thomas was having.

He also presented a typed, unsigned note, which he said was also among Thomas's belongings, that alleged a mixed spiritual and sexual relationship with the bishop.

The typed note referred twice to "Howard" and described him twice as "bishop." It said the bishop's "kindness seems to overshadow the sexual acts I am compelled to endure" and said the bishop claimed celibacy was not involved "because the Bible describes celibacy as being free of women."

At the press conference, Bishop Hubbard said, "I do not know Thomas Zalay. I have never had any relationship with Thomas Zalay."

The following day Anthony Bonneau of Schenectady claimed that in the 1970s, when he was a runaway teenager living in Albany's Washington Park, he had at least two paid sexual encounters with Bishop Hubbard. He said they occurred sometime between 1976 and 1979, but he did not recall exact dates.



Dave Oxford/CNS

In March 2003, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard greets a family during the Rite of Election at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Albany. Bishop Hubbard has denied recent allegations made against him.

Bishop Hubbard, now 65, was made bishop of Albany in 1977. Before that he was a priest of the diocese.

When the first allegation against him was made, Bishop Hubbard was vacationing in Florida. In his absence, the diocese released a statement labeling the claim "outrageous, despicable and defamatory." The diocese also referred the matter to the Albany County district attorney, asking that an independent investigation be conducted.

Bishop Hubbard, who cut his vacation short to return and respond to the allegations, said he would cooperate fully with the district attorney. He said he was "willing and eager to take a polygraph test so that there is no question in anyone's mind about the falsity of this allegation."

"I have never been afraid to apologize for mistakes that I and others may have made in handling the scandal of sexual abuse of minors by priests," he said. "But today I have nothing to apologize for. The allegations are completely, utterly false."

The bishop also rejected the idea that he would resign, saying, "It would be wrong to dignify an absolutely false charge by walking away from my responsibilities."

Bonneau told reporters that after his teen years as a male street prostitute he reformed and is now a "devout Christian" and family man. He said he recognized Bishop Hubbard as one of his former johns when he saw him on television a decade ago, but he told no one but his wife at

the time.

Following Bonneau's allegations, Father Doyle reiterated Bishop Hubbard's earlier remarks, saying the bishop strongly denies the claim, wants an independent investigation and looks forward to taking a lie-detector test.

Aretakis, the attorney who appeared with the two accusers, has had a series of stormy public disputes with the Albany Diocese. He represents several clients who allege clergy sexual abuse when they were minors but whose abuse claims are barred from legal action by the statute of limitations.

He has faced a series of setbacks in his efforts to find other actionable claims against the diocese or the priests accused of abuse. Of four lawsuits he has filed, one was dropped by the plaintiff, two were dismissed in court and only a small part of the fourth is still pending.

At the end of January a Schenectady judge dismissed with prejudice all 12 causes of action in a lawsuit Aretakis filed last spring claiming a priest was "stalking" his client.

In his point-by-point dismissal of the suit, Judge Barry D. Kramer called various allegations in it "time barred," "irrelevant," "completely unsupported by the evidence" and "pure speculation."

The New York Committee on Professional Standards is currently investigating several ethics complaints against Aretakis, including three in connection with his disputes with the diocese or its personnel.