

EUCCHARISTIC EVENT ATTRACTS THOUSANDS

COLLEGE PARK, Ga. (CNS) — More than 23,000 people gathered at the Georgia International Convention Center June 12 to participate in the ninth annual Eucharistic Congress, a daylong event sponsored by the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

The day, which was dedicated to the central sacrament of the Catholic faith, brought together the faithful from all over north Georgia and as far away as Florida, Alabama and Pennsylvania to celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi and the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The congress took place two days after Pope John Paul II declared 2005-06 the "Year of the Eucharist."

TUCSON DIOCESE MAY FILE FOR BANKRUPTCY

TUCSON, Ariz. (CNS) — A Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing may be the only option available to the Tucson Diocese in the face of sexual-abuse lawsuits seeking millions of dollars, Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas said in a letter to his people.

It could mark the first time a U.S. Catholic diocese utilizes Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

In the letter, dated June 16 and read at parish Masses the weekend of June 19-20, Bishop Kicanas said he is currently engaged in "the proper consultation necessary to begin what now appears to be the only option for the diocese."

ASSIST MIGRANTS, ARCHDIOCESE URGES

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — The Archdiocese of Mexico City said President Vicente Fox should shift his focus of concern for Mexicans who migrate to the United States.

"Instead of seeking the vote of our countrymen living abroad, it would be better if the government placed real political pressure to bring about respect for the labor rights" of Mexican migrants in the United States, the Mexico City Archdiocese said in an editorial published June 20 in its weekly newsletter.

Fox sent a proposal to Congress June 15 that would allow millions of Mexicans living abroad to vote in Mexico's 2006 presidential elections.

Bishop cleared of allegations

Investigator finds 'no credible evidence' to support accusations

James Breig/CNS

ALBANY, N.Y. — An independent investigator who spent four months looking into allegations of sexual misconduct against Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany has cleared him of all the allegations.

At a June 24 press conference, Mary Jo White, a former U.S. attorney, repeatedly said there is "no credible evidence" as she went through the list of allegations that had been made about the bishop.

She also issued a 200-page public report detailing her investigation, supported by 350 pages of exhibits.

White said the investigation, which began in February, included interviews with about 300 witnesses, a review of more than 20,000 pages of documents, and nine polygraph examinations conducted by the former chief of the FBI's polygraph unit.

White said Bishop Hubbard voluntarily took a polygraph "and was found to be truthful in his denial of all" the allegations against him.

In February, John Aretakis, a New York City attorney who lives in the Albany Diocese, arranged press conferences at which he and his clients publicly accused the bishop of sexual misconduct during the 1970s.

Aretakis also made public a document in which Father John Minkler, a diocesan priest, accused Bishop Hubbard of having sexual relations with four priests. Father Minkler committed suicide after the document was made public.

The bishop vehemently denied all of the claims and said he had never engaged in sexual activity with anyone of any gender or any age at any time. The bishop also said he would not investigate himself and called



Dave Oxford/CNS

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard greets a family during the Rite of Election at Albany's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in early March 2003.

for an independent investigation of the allegations.

The Albany County district attorney declined the diocese's request to look into the claims since they were beyond the statute of limitations. The Diocesan Review Board, the panel charged with investigating claims of sexual misconduct against priests of the Albany Diocese, retained White to conduct the investigation. She is a former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York who prosecuted mobster John Gotti and the 1993 World Trade Center bombers. White is now in private practice in New York City.

Although White met all of the conditions Aretakis set for cooperating in the inquiry, he refused to participate.

Aretakis had offered as evidence of one of his allegations an unsigned, undated, typed letter that he claimed was written by a man who died in 1978. White's report said:

"We have serious doubts about the authenticity" of the letter "and question whether it was actually written" by the man to whom it is attributed.

Aretakis refused to allow the letter to be examined by an independent document expert of his own choosing.

In her findings, White said she had found "credible evidence" that a former priest of the Albany Diocese who led a homosexual lifestyle had often masqueraded as the bishop. The former priest denied doing so but failed a polygraph exam.

As for the claims in the Father Minkler document, all of the parties involved passed polygraph exams in which they denied having sexual relations with Bishop Hubbard.

"We are extremely confident in our conclusion that there is no credible evidence to substantiate any of the allegations of sexual misconduct or activity made against Bishop Hubbard," the report said.

Pope: Catholic facilities exist for 'one reason'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Meeting with bishops from the U.S. Northwest, Pope John Paul II said Catholic schools and health-care facilities must give "convincing witness" to church teachings — especially on such key issues as respect for human life, marriage and the family.

The church's many religious, educational and charitable institutions "exist for one reason only: to proclaim the Gospel," the pope said June 24.

"It is of utmost importance, therefore, that the church's institutions be genuinely Catholic: Catholic in their self-understanding and Catholic in their identity," he said.

The pope was addressing 11 bishops from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington, who were on their "ad limina" visits to the Vatican. The visits are required of bishops every five years to report on the status of their dioceses.

The pope's speech touched on

some sensitive points of debate in the United States, including academic freedom at Catholic universities and the potential strings attached to state funding of church-run hospitals.

The pope said the church's social and cultural activities cannot be divorced from its main task of evangelization. All Catholics organizations, he said, must witness to the faith as they operate in a pluralistic society.