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BURKE: REVIEW BOARD WORK DEEPENED FAITH

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Although it meant raising "holy hell" with some "recalcitrant bishops," her work as a member of the National Review Board deepened her faith, said Justice Anne M. Burke.

Burke said her 29-month term as a charter member of the lay board that monitors church compliance with sex-abuse prevention policies transformed her into an active Catholic.

Burke was interviewed Nov. 14 while attending her last board meeting in Washington.

NUN'S SUCCESSOR VISITS AIDS HOME IN DENVER

DENVER (CNS) — With the humility and simplicity of her predecessor, Blessed Mother Teresa, Sister Nirmala Joshi brought a message of love and tenderness to Denver Nov. 8.

The superior general of the Missionaries of Charity was in the Denver Archdiocese for her first visit to the sisters of her order who operate Seton House, a home for AIDS sufferers. Following a Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, she delivered a brief message to those in attendance.

"Today I bring you the message that Mother brought the world, that God is love," Sister Nirmala said.

ALL CATHOLICS HAVE DUTY TO EVANGELIZE

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — On the 40th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, "the light of peoples," Pope John Paul II said every Catholic has a duty to evangelize the world.

The recent "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church" offers a useful tool to laity who want to implement Vatican II's teachings in modern society, he said.

The pope said *Lumen Gentium* presented the church as a pilgrim moving toward fulfillment in heaven but marked on earth with a real, though imperfect, sanctity. It "stimulated the people of God to assume ... their responsibilities in the building up of that kingdom of God that will have its fulfillment only beyond history," he said.

Bishops approve initiatives

Nancy Frazier O'Brien/CNS

WASHINGTON — Finishing up their business a day earlier than originally scheduled, the U.S. bishops concluded their fall general meeting in Washington Nov. 17 with a flurry of votes on a national catechism for adults, a multiyear pastoral initiative on marriage and a historic decision to join a national ecumenical forum.

On a busy final day of their Nov. 15-17 meeting, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops also voted to gather annual information about new sex-abuse accusations against Catholic clergy and church workers; approved three Spanish-language liturgical changes; and accepted a proposal to streamline the 2005 diocesan sex-abuse audits.

A report from the bishops' Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians, originally scheduled for public discussion by the conference, was presented in written form without comment or discussion, at the suggestion of Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington, who heads the task force.

The report said the bishops would develop a "Reader on Catholics in Public Life" and that their doctrine and pastoral-practices committees have agreed to take up the matter of church teaching on when it is proper for Catholic politicians, and all Catholics, to receive Communion.

The 456-page "U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults," approved by a 218-10 vote, was written in response to a Vatican request that bishops or bishops' conferences develop such catechisms to complement the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church* issued in 1992.

The Vatican's 1997 General Directory for Catechesis said "local catechisms, prepared or approved by diocesan bishops or by episcopal conferences, are invaluable instruments for catechesis" because they bring the Gospel into the local culture.

The adult catechism must receive *recognitio*, or confirmation, from the Holy See before becoming official.

The marriage initiative, approved by a 195-20 vote, will begin with a survey of bishops, followed by a symposium of theologians and social scientists, focus groups of lay people and sessions with pastoral leaders and bishops' conference committees, and lead to a pastoral letter on marriage in 2007.

The proposal to join Christian Churches Together in the USA, which passed 151-73, marks the first



Paul Haring/CNS

Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash. (left), the newly elected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, attends the bishops' meeting in Washington Nov. 16 with the outgoing USCCB president, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill.

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time that the U.S. Catholic Church will be a partner church in such a national ecumenical body, although Catholic churches in about 70 other countries belong to national councils of churches or similar bodies.

Bishop Stephen E. Blaize of Stockton, Calif., chair of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, called the new organization "a forum for participation" through which Christian churches can "pray together, grow in understanding together and witness together."

The bishops also took up two proposals related to their "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." The gathering of annual data from dioceses was approved by a 137-85 vote, while a related proposal allowing for fewer on-site inspections and more self-reporting in diocesan audits passed by 189-35.

The Spanish-language liturgical texts were designed to formally incorporate important Latin American rituals into U.S. church services.

These include a blessing ceremony for the *quinceanera*, a popular celebration that takes place when a Hispanic girl is 15 to mark her passage from childhood to adolescence; an infant baptismal rite; and additions to the marriage liturgy that incorporate traditions popular mostly in Mexico, Central America and Puerto Rico.

The *quinceanera* and marriage liturgy votes were unanimous, while

the baptismal rite passed by 208-1.

Much of the first day and a half of the meeting was devoted to the election of new leadership and approval of plans and priorities guiding the conference's budgetary decisions.

The bishops overwhelmingly approved a series of recommendations aimed at limiting the conference's projects to those mandated by the Vatican or the bishops themselves.

The bishops approved a \$129.4 million budget for 2005 — a 1.8 percent increase — and agreed to create an ad hoc committee which would collect and distribute contributions for the church in Africa, using staff and resources from a handful of offices to manage the effort.

Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., was elected to a three-year term as USCCB president, and Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago was elected vice president.

Bishop Skylstad, USCCB vice president under Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., took up his new post at the close of the meeting.

Contributing to this roundup were Jerry Filteau, Patricia Zapor and Agostino Bono.

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