

Vatican decries societal trends

Sarah Delaney/CNS

VATICAN CITY — A top Vatican official said President George W. Bush won re-election because of his position on moral issues, which underscores the importance of the church's efforts to protect the traditional values of family and life.

Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo made his assessment before members of the Pontifical Council for the Family, which he heads, at their plenary session at the Vatican Nov. 18.

"This moment, for us, is very important because the triumph of Bush was only because of moral values," he told the session.

Bush is addressing "moral questions" like family, chastity and life, he said. Referring to Bush's June visit to Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Lopez said, "The Holy Father recognized, when President Bush was here, the importance of this direction, this battle."

The cardinal's comments followed a speech in which he painted a bleak picture of contemporary society, where legislators and international

agencies undermine traditional institutions like marriage between a man and a woman.

"Today the problem of the family and of life is the primary concern for bishops and legislatures," he said.

In many European and Latin American countries, he said, there are packages of legislation dangerous to the church's teachings on the family.

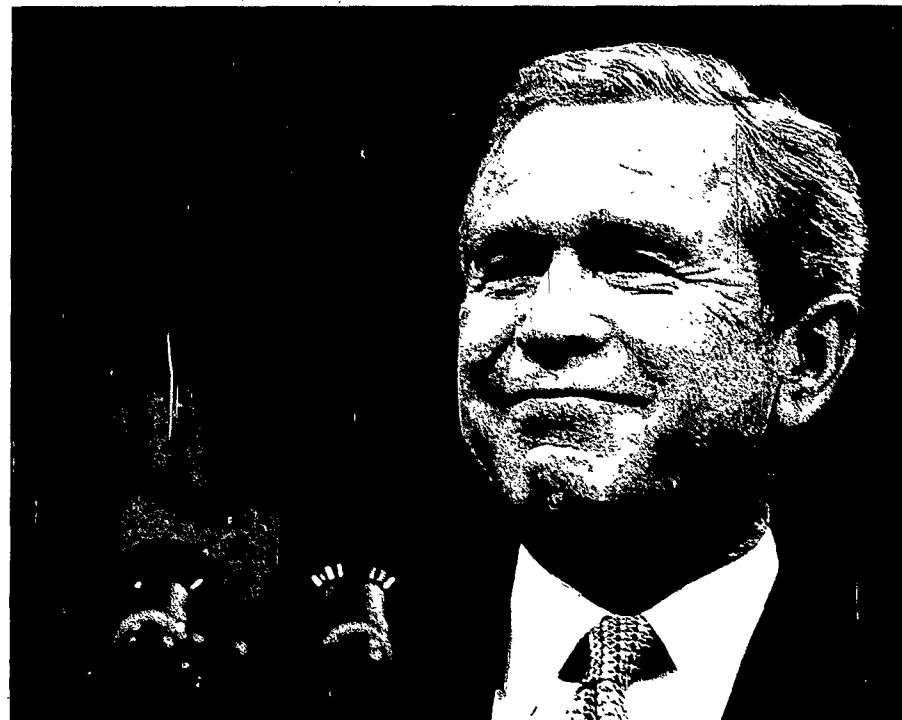
Many countries have passed or are considering measures on issues like same-sex marriage, cohabitation, abortion, stem-cell research and euthanasia. These are matters on which the church takes an unequivocal stand that is often in conflict with governments and legislatures.

"There is a progressive program of dehumanization in parliaments, institutions and in laws," he said.

The government of Spain, for example, has proposed legalizing same-sex marriage and adoption of children by homosexual couples.

"Never has there been a danger like there is now," the cardinal said.

Many bishops see a "new paganism" and an "exacerbated secular-



Reuters/CNS

President George W. Bush smiles during his victory rally in Washington Nov. 3. A Vatican official said Bush won re-election because of his position on moral issues.

ism" in some countries where it has become difficult to talk about faith, he said, adding, "There is no space for religion. Those who exhibit a profession of faith are accused of dogmatic behavior."

Christian points of view often are not heard or taken into account, resulting in laws by parliamentary ma-

majorities who "impose their interpretation of democracy," he said.

Likewise, he said, international institutions like the United Nations and UNICEF "impose their definitions" in areas like contraception, abortion and the beginning of human life.

He denounced the United Nations for giving large sums to poor countries for contraceptive programs and said international agencies had "excessive economic power."

John M. Klink, an adviser to the Vatican mission to the United Nations and to the council, said "there is a total lack of interest on the part of the U.N. on family issues."

In comments to Catholic News Service, he accused the United Nations of interfering in the affairs of sovereign countries by discouraging pro-life legislation.

As a participant in Catholic Call, Klink also serves as an adviser to Bush on Catholic matters.

Jerry Coniker, a U.S. lay member of the Pontifical Council for the Family, said that the work of the church was especially important now because "we are at a crossroads; either we enter an age of barbarism or great evangelization."

He told CNS that Catholics "are the only ones in the world who can stop the culture of death."

Brazilian Bishop Karl Romer, council secretary, warned of "a great orchestra of liberalism" that makes laws that do not take into account "the greater law of the dignity of the person."

The bishop told CNS that "absurd" laws "don't recognize the family based on marriage between a man and a woman" and "reduce marriage to a union of anybody."

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