NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Bishops vote yes on two-year set of priorities and plans

Mark Pattison Catholic News Service | Nov. 21, 2009

BALTIMORE -- The U.S. bishops Nov. 17 approved two items regarding their priorities and plans for the next two years during their fall general meeting in Baltimore.

One was a priority plan titled "Deepen Faith, Nurture Hope, Celebrate Life," which outlines goals and objectives for five priority areas of the U.S. church. The vote was 232-2, with one abstention.

The other was a more than 330-page set of "strategy and operational plans" for commissions, offices and departments of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. This passed 223-2, with five abstentions.

Both votes needed a majority of bishops present and voting for approval.

The five priority areas of church life identified by the bishops are: faith formation and sacramental practice; cultural diversity in the church; strengthening marriage; promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life; and the life and dignity of the human person.

The goal for faith formation and sacramental practice is "to invite all Catholics to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ in the church through formation focused on sacred Scripture and tradition, and sacraments, especially the Sunday Eucharist."

Under cultural diversity in the church, the goals are "to increase the Catholic community's understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity in the church" and "to include diverse cultures in the life and leadership of dioceses, parishes and other Catholic organizations in the United States."

The bishops' goals for strengthening marriage are: "to inspire, challenge and help Catholics to witness to marriage as a natural institution founded by God and raised to the dignity of a Christian sacrament, and to the value of children and family life," and "to work for laws and public policies that recognize marriage as a union of a man and a woman, strengthen family life and protect religious liberty."

The two goals under vocation promotion are "to help individuals hear and respond to a call by God to the priesthood or consecrated life through prayer and activities," and "to educate all of the faithful on the importance of encouraging others to consider a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life through prayer and activities."

There is one overarching goal under the area of life and dignity of the human person: "to affirm the intrinsic value of human life and the dignity of every human being in a way that transforms the culture."

The document says the "key message to be conveyed" is: "As a gift from God, every human life is sacred from conception to natural death. The life and dignity of every person must be respected and protected at every stage and in every condition. The right to life is the first and most fundamental principle of human rights that leads Catholics to actively work for a world of greater respect for human life and greater commitment to justice and

peace."

The document outlines objectives on how to reach each goal, plus a larger number of activities to meet the objectives, such as evangelization tools, catechesis, ministry training, advocacy efforts, and preparation of various materials for Web site use and parish bulletins. It identifies coordinators in different departments of the bishops' conference, as well as bishops' committees to serve as collaborators.

Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Priorities and Plans and secretary of the U.S. bishops, noted that the priorities had been approved in principle by the bishops a year ago, and that they are of "pastoral importance for our conference."

In documentation prepared for the bishops prior to the meeting, Bishop Murry said the bishops' conference had been "engaged in the most extensive planning process it has ever engaged in," citing 2009 as the last of a three-year implementation process of a strategic plan that also restructured the conference's committees, offices and staff.

This year's task in the restructuring, Bishop Murray said, was to "finalize the integration of the conference-wide strategic plan" with the individual mandates and strategies of each committee and office.

For a complete roundup of *NCR* coverage of the U.S. bihsops' fall 2009 general assembly, click ncronline.org/bishopsmeeting [1].

Source URL (retrieved on *07/10/2014 - 10:57*): http://ncronline.org/news/bishops-vote-yes-two-year-set-priorities-and-plans

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/bishopsmeeting