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

# Charter review among topics facing bishops in June

Nancy Frazier O'Brien  Catholic News Service  | Jun. 1, 2011

**WASHINGTON** -- Although the U.S. bishops' spring general assembly will focus primarily on a review of the 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" and consideration of a new document on physician-assisted suicide, the June 15-17 meeting in Seattle also will include a variety of presentations looking forward and back.

Ken Hackett, president of Catholic Relief Services since 1993, will address the bishops about his nearly four decades of work with the international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Catholic community as his retirement nears. Msgr. David Malloy, a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, also will address the assembly as he concludes a five-year term as general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The bishops are expected to look to the 2012 elections as they discuss their perennial "Faithful Citizenship" document on political responsibility, and Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington will report to them on progress toward incorporation of Anglican groups into the Catholic Church in the United States under Pope Benedict XVI's November 2009 apostolic constitution "Anglicanorum coetibus."

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin will speak to the U.S. bishops about the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in his city in June 2012. Maryknoll Father Edward Dougherty, superior general of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, will talk to them about the 100th anniversary of the organization founded by the bishops to recruit, train, send and support American missioners overseas.

Bishop Kevin J. Farrell of Dallas, chairman of the bishops' Committee on National Collections, will report to his fellow bishops on a recent evaluation of national collections and there will be an update on USCCB efforts in defense of traditional marriage, including a new Spanish-language video.

Most of the changes to the charter under consideration in Seattle involve bringing it into line with recent Vatican instructions in response to the crisis of sexual abuse of minors by priests. These include mentioning child pornography as a crime against church law and defining the abuse of someone who "habitually lacks reason," such as a person with mental retardation, as the equivalent of child abuse.

The proposed revisions also reflect the recent release of the long-awaited report on "The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010," which had been mandated by the charter.

The report, prepared by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and released in Washington May 18, concluded that there is "no single identifiable 'cause' of sexually abusive behavior toward minors" and encouraged steps to deny abusers "the opportunity to abuse."

Discussion of this second set of revisions to the charter -- the first was in 2005 -- is likely to lead the bishops to a wide-ranging discussion of the report and other aspects of the clergy sex abuse crisis. Although at least some of the discussion will take place during the meeting's approximately seven hours of public sessions, some is

likely to occur during up to 10 hours of executive sessions and regional meetings.

Bishop Blase J. Cupich of Spokane, Wash., chairman of the USCCB Committee on Child and Youth Protection, wrote in the May 30 issue of America magazine that the release of the John Jay report "is a jumping-off point from which the Catholic Church and especially its leadership must continue to take steps to show that it will be steadfast in addressing the sexual abuse of minors."

"This is not a time for the bishops to sit back and applaud themselves for getting a handle on a shameful moment in church history," he added. "If anything, the church's leadership must now step forward and give new vitality to its promise to protect and its pledge to heal."

The other major document up for a vote by the bishops is "To Live Each Day With Dignity," which would be the first statement on assisted suicide by the full body of bishops. The USCCB Administrative Committee issued a brief "Statement on Euthanasia" in 1991, which said legalized euthanasia violates divine law, human dignity and basic "American convictions about human rights and equality."

Intended more as a policy statement than a teaching document, the document aims to convince citizens and legislators in states facing decisions about permitting assisted suicide in their jurisdictions that rejecting the option is the compassionate choice and help them find solutions to the suffering that sometimes tempts dying people to consider suicide.

If passed, "To Live Each Day With Dignity" would be paired on a USCCB website with a variety of fact sheets on such issues as the role of depression, views of medical experts, assisted suicide as a threat to good palliative care, lessons from Oregon and Washington state, lessons from the Netherlands and other topics.

In 2008, Washington became the second state to allow assisted suicide by voter initiative; Oregon approved it in 1994. A court in Montana also has allowed assisted suicide there.

Among the other matters set to come before the bishops at their Seattle meeting are:

-- Reauthorization of a document on preaching that was begun in 2005 but later dropped. The new document would come up for a vote in November 2012.

-- Two liturgical items pertaining to the Spanish translation of U.S. adaptations to the Roman Missal and to a collection of Mass prayers for major patronal feasts from Latin America and Spain.

-- A decision on whether to integrate the Commission on Certification and Accreditation, now a separate civil corporation, into the structure of the USCCB. The commission that certifies lay ecclesial ministers for work in the church would become a subcommittee of the bishops' Committee on Catholic Education.

---

**Source URL (retrieved on *08/31/2014 - 01:07*):** http://ncronline.org/news/charter-review-among-topics-facing-bishops-june