



BRIEFS

Bishops call for Congress to pass immigration reform by year's end

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) — Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago urged President Barack Obama and Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform before the end of 2009. Cardinal George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called for the action June 18 on behalf of all the bishops at their annual spring meeting, held this year in San Antonio. "It has been clear for years that the United States immigration system requires repair and that reform legislation should not be delayed," he said in a prepared statement. "I would ask President Barack Obama and congressional leaders of both parties to work together to fashion and enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation before the end of the year." The bishops said they are prepared to assist Congress and the president in this effort. Obama has said he intends to take up immigration reform this year, but the White House staff has said they don't expect it to be resolved until 2010. Some House and Senate committees have begun holding hearings on some aspects of immigration issues. "We urge respect and observance of all just laws, and we do not approve or encourage the illegal entry of anyone into our country," Cardinal George said.

Palliative care must be part of health reform, CHA official says

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Palliative care that focuses on pain management and attention to the psychological, social and spiritual needs of suffering and dying patients must be part of the nation's health care reform, the new chairwoman of the Catholic Health Association's board of trustees said at a Capitol Hill briefing. Colleen Scanlon, an attorney who previously worked as a palliative care nurse, said such care can be "a model to improve quality and manage scarce resources" as policymakers debate health care reform. "By reducing pain and suffering and coordinating care transitions, palliative care reduces emergency room visits, hospital stays and readmissions, and most importantly improves patient and family satisfaction," said Scanlon, senior vice president for advocacy at Catholic Health Initiatives in Denver. At the June 15 briefing, she represented both CHA and the Supportive Care Coalition: Pursuing Excellence in Palliative Care, a coalition of 19 Catholic health systems. Scanlon said research shows that in many cases people hospitalized with life-threatening illness "receive expensive, aggressive medical intervention that is often unwanted and that diminishes their quality of life." Given that the estimated 90 million Americans now living with serious and life-threatening illnesses is expected to double over the next 25 years, "we must find a better way to care for the seriously ill and dying," Scanlon said.



Report says 10,000 migrants taken in Mexico in six months' time

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — A nun who works on migration issues for Mexico's bishops said she was not surprised by a report from Mexico's National Human Rights Commission

that nearly 10,000 undocumented migrants traveling through Mexico on their way to the United States were kidnapped during a six-month period. "Organized crime groups see in the migrant population a group that is extremely vulnerable for committing these kinds of crimes," Scalabrini Sister Leticia Gutierrez, executive secretary of the Mexican bishops' human mobility ministry, told Catholic News Service. She said church officials' research and interviews with migrants contributed to the report released June 15. The report underscores the changing nature of the challenges facing undocumented migrants — most of whom are from Central America — as they travel through Mexico. For decades, migrants have been targeted by corrupt public officials and gangs that would demand bribes and steal their meager possessions. Those working with migrants now report that migrants are being targeted by criminal groups — including many with ties to powerful narcotics-trafficking cartels — who kidnap them and demand ransoms from relatives living in either the United States or the migrants' home countries. The human rights report outlined a \$25 million industry that was responsible for kidnapping 9,758 migrants between September 2008 and February 2009. Sixty-seven percent of the victims were from Honduras, while nearly 90 percent of the victims were apprehended by "organized groups."

Liturgy translations fall short of two-thirds; mail balloting needed

SAN ANTONIO (CNS) — The U.S. bishops will have to poll members missing from their spring meeting in San Antonio before it's known whether they have approved liturgical prayers, special Masses and key sections of an English translation of the Order of the Mass. Five texts being prepared for use in English-speaking countries failed to get the necessary two-thirds votes of the Latin-rite U.S. bishops during the June 18 session of the bishops' meeting. With 244 Latin-rite bishops in the United States eligible to vote on the questions, the required two-thirds would be 163. With 189 eligible bishops attending the meeting, only 134 voted to accept the first section, Masses and prayers for various needs and intentions. On four subsequent translations, the votes also failed to reach two-thirds, meaning the 55 bishops not present will be polled by mail on all five parts. That process is expected to take several weeks.

CTSA head suggests approaches to resolving 'impasses' in church

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (CNS) — Unresolved "impasses" in theology and in church life lead to counterproductive stalemates that "stunt" the growth of the church, according to the outgoing president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. "Academic stalemates may be rather benign, but stalemates in real life can be malignant," said Terrence W. Tilley, chairman of the theology department at Fordham University. "Real-life stalemates can be quite vicious, even destructive," pointing to past church stalemates as the schism and the Protestant Reformation. "These malignant stalemates destroyed the possibility of ecclesial unity — and will not be overcome as long as the shepherds of one flock demand that separated brethren repent of their errors to be accepted back into their sheepfold," Tilley said June 7.

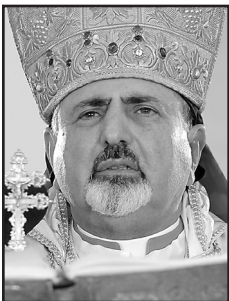
From the Vatican...

By Catholic News Service

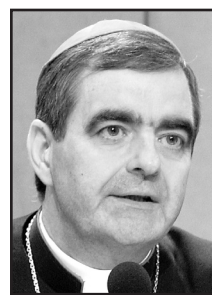
Alleviating the "acute suffering of the poor" in North Korea must take priority over military action if the current crisis on the Korean peninsula is to be resolved, the umbrella group representing Catholic Charities worldwide said. Members of **Caritas Internationalis** from Asia, Europe and North America met in **Beijing** June 13-15 to discuss the growing tensions in northeast Asia following North Korea's recent nuclear weapon tests and its vows to strengthen its arms program. "Armed intervention in response to North Korea's belligerent actions will only cause further human tragedy and compound the suffering of the people there," said the Caritas Internationalis secretary-general, **Lesley-Anne Knight**, in a statement. "Genuine negotiations with concrete outcomes for improving the daily living conditions of the people are vital steps in reducing the suffering and engaging with North Korea to find a solution to this crisis," she said. The U.N. Security Council imposed tougher sanctions on North Korea after the reclusive Pyongyang government conducted its second nuclear test May 25. The Security Council's unanimous action June 12 included a stepped-up arms embargo and new financial curbs that would extend a list of North Korean entities, goods and individuals subjected to an assets freeze and travel ban first outlined in a 2006 resolution.



Pope Benedict XVI said he prays every day for peace in the Middle East and especially for Christians in Iraq. "I pray constantly for peace in the Middle East, in particular for Christians who live in the beloved Iraqi nation; I present their sufferings to the Lord in the eucharistic sacrifice every day," the pope said in an audience with the new head of the Syrian Catholic Church. **Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan** and members of the synod of the **Syrian Catholic Church** met with Pope Benedict in a special audience June 19 at the Vatican. Patriarch Younan was the head of the Newark-based Syrian-rite diocese in the United States and Canada from 1995 until his January election as the new patriarch of Antioch. The Syrian Catholic Church has archdioceses in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Sudan. The church includes approximately **200,000 members** around the world, including in the Holy Land, Turkey, Venezuela, the United States and Canada. In his address, Pope Benedict urged members of the Syrian Catholic Church to continue to focus their lives on the Eucharist. It is the bread of life that "nourishes your communities and makes them grow in unity and charity," he said.



The Vatican's synod council has completed a text summarizing the discussion and proposals of the 2008 world **Synod of Bishops on the Bible**. **Archbishop Nikola Eterovic**, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, and 13 members of the council met at the Vatican June 3-4 to finalize a draft summary of the last synod and chose themes to propose to **Pope Benedict XVI** for the next world synod. Using the 55 propositions approved by the bishops at the 2008 synod, council members drew up a text they believed represented the consensus of the synod members. The text will be given to the pope for possible use as the basis of his **post-synodal apostolic exhortation**, according to a statement released by the Vatican June 18. The 2008 synod focused on "The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church." The statement did not say what the three themes proposed for the **next synod** were. The gathering likely will be held in **2011**.



The Gospel message cannot be fully part of people's lives unless it has been faithfully **translated into their language** and is reflected in their culture, **Pope Benedict XVI** said. Talking about the life and mission of **Sts. Cyril and Methodius**, ninth-century brothers and missionaries, the pope said the two recognized that although the Slavic people of Central Europe had embraced Christianity and were baptized, the people needed to hear the Gospel and praise God in their own language. At his weekly general audience June 17 in St. Peter's Square, Pope Benedict said the two brothers not only helped invent an alphabet for the Slavonic language — an alphabet now known as Cyrillic in honor of one of the brothers — but they also carried out a theological battle against what is known as the **"Trilingual Heresy."** The heresy, the pope said, held that Hebrew, Greek and Latin were the only languages in which it is worthy to praise God. Studying the work of the fourth-century theologian **St. Gregory Nazianzen**, St. Cyril became convinced of "the value of language in the transmission of revelation," because Jesus Christ is the Word of God addressed to all people of every language, the pope said.

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