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Upcoming: Mass Media Specialists from Around World Return from Rome Meeting with Draft of a Pastoral Plan on Social Communications; National Symposium to Examine How the Catholic Church Responds to Divorce and Remarriage

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Every Catholic diocese in the world should develop a plan to use the mass media more effectively for evangelization and to combat such social problems as materialism and a growing lack of concern for "the plight of the poor and rejected." In addition, the Catholic church should make "special efforts to give the poor and less powerful" in the Third World access to information that wealthier countries enjoy.

Those are the leading recommendations from a 16-member international group of mass communications experts who spent a week in Nemi, Italy, brainstorming communications strategies to take the Catholic church into the 21st century. "The meeting really allowed for an international Catholic dialogue," said Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H., executive director of the Center for Religious Telecommunications at the University of Dayton. "We attempted to come to a common understanding of the new role the church should play in an Information Age."

Zukowski, who is also president of Unda-USA (a national Catholic association of communicators), has been charged with making revisions to the draft pastoral plan on social communications that the group wrote during the Feb. 15-25 meeting. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications--composed of cardinals, archbishops and the presidents of three international Catholic communication organizations--approved the first draft. This council and the writers of the Nemi document will review Zukowski's second draft. Wider distribution of the final plan may come by the end of the year, according to Zukowski.

The group, which also met with Pope John Paul II, gathered in Rome on the 25th anniversary of Vatican Council II's decree on social communications, "Inter Mirifica." The group's draft document is an update of the 1971 pastoral instruction, "Communio Et Progressio."

For media interviews, contact Sister Angela Ann Zukowski at (513) 229-3126.

NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM TO EXAMINE HOW THE CATHOLIC CHURCH RESPONDS TO DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Recent studies estimate the number of divorced Catholics in the United States to be at least six million. About 75 percent of divorced Catholics have remarried or will remarry, most without an annulment and without a Catholic ceremony.

"What human being in America doesn't have someone close to them who has gone through the pain of divorce?" asked Bill Roberts, a professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton. "It makes us analyze whether we have yet found the most Christ-like way of addressing this heart-rendering issue."

Nearly 600 theologians, canon lawyers, family life ministers and scholars from 30 states and Canada are expected to attend UD's symposium, "Divorce and Remarriage: Religious and Psychological Perspectives," March 9-11 on campus.

For more information, contact Bill Roberts at (513) 229-4430.