

# BISHOPS CONVENE AMIDST GOOD NEWS

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) met November 10-13 in Washington, D.C. for their annual meeting. They did so amidst good news from two surveys of Roman Catholics.

The results of a Gallup survey were reported on November 7 in the *New York Times*. It showed that 49 percent of Catholics say they feel the bishops are doing a good job; this was up from 35 percent a year ago.

In a related story in the same day's *Washington Post*, we learned from a study done by researchers at Georgetown University that Catholics were more generous in their donations in 2002 than they were the previous year. The 5 percent increase was substantial—it was twice the rate of inflation. And considering that 2002 was the year that news of the scandal broke, and the market went south, the results are startling. With the Church on the mend, and the market picking up, it looks like 2003 will be an even better year for the Church.

“The good news comes at a time when the bishops need to take a serious look at who their real friends are,” we told the media. We drew attention to a three-day meeting in Milwaukee by the radical reform group, Call to Action; the group met the weekend before the USCCB conference. This is the same group that holds funds in escrow for members in parishes unhappy with church operations. Moreover, the same group has taken out ads in secular newspapers calling for a boycott of dioceses it doesn't like.

Then there is Voice of the Faithful. On November 10, the day the bishops convened in Washington, it held a press conference

across the street from where the USCCB met. It demanded, among other things, financial accountability. This group also holds hundreds of thousands of dollars in escrow from parishioners who are unhappy with diocesan operations. It is the same group that collects money from Catholics to be given to the local diocese on the condition that the local Ordinary spend the money according to its dictates. And they are lecturing the bishops on financial accountability!

“In essence,” we said in a news release, “the surveys indicate that lay Catholics are coming back to the fold, save for those who seek to control the Church.”