

# Pope tells new priests they must be perfect

## As sex-abuse summit looms, he stresses a 'higher loyalty'

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VATICAN CITY — Days before an unprecedented Vatican summit on clergy sex abuse in America, Pope John Paul II told 20 new priests yesterday they must be perfect and adhere to a "higher loyalty."

While John Paul's exhortations were not unusual for such a ceremony, they had symbolic significance ahead of this week's summit with 12 U.S. cardinals and several bishops concerning the abuse scandal roiling the Catholic Church in America.

The church is accused of covering up sexual misconduct by priests, in some cases by moving known abusers from job to job. It already has paid millions of dollars in damages and faces numerous lawsuits from victims. Dozens of priests have been suspended or forced to resign.

The pontiff's comments yesterday highlighted the strict standard of fidelity to vows he has set for churchmen — and which some in America have broken. None of the 20 new priests were Americans.



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**Pope John Paul II blessed a new priest yesterday during an ordination ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.**

As the new priests gathered in St. Peter's Basilica, John Paul told them Jesus expects a "higher loyalty" from priests, a more rigorous poverty and humility.

"He asks of you to be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect," he said. "In a word, the Lord wants you to be holy."

Last week the pope summoned the

13 American cardinals and several bishops to Rome for a summit tomorrow and Wednesday to discuss the scandal — underscoring the seriousness the Vatican now appears to be placing on the issue.

One, 81-year-old Cardinal James Hickey, the retired archbishop of Washington, is too frail to attend.

Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston,

who is expected in Rome, told his congregation yesterday that the scandal was undermining the mission of the church and "must spark immediate and decisive changes."

"This is a wake-up call for the church," said Law, who rejected calls to resign after he acknowledged transferring a priest to another parish despite knowing of sexual misconduct allegations against the man.

That defrocked priest later was sentenced to prison.

The cardinals and bishops attending the summit will look to the Vatican for guidance and backing on several issues, foremost among them whether the church should reassign sex offenders and create a uniform American policy for reporting abuse claims to police.

As he arrived in Rome yesterday, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago said the summit also may explore issues beyond the scandal and the church's response, including celibacy and homosexuality.

"Once . . . you've assured that children are protected and victims are cared for — there are the issues," he said.

"Around the ordained priesthood in the church there are liberals who don't like celibacy and conservatives who don't like homosexuality. So I imagine that both of those issues will come up, but I am not sure in what form."