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## Some odds and ends

by John L. Allen Jr.

All Things Catholic

On the margins of Benedict XVI's Angelus address on Sunday, outgoing director of the Vatican Press Office Joaquin Navarro-Valls gave a live interview to the main Italian television news broadcast Tg1, speaking about the pope's new Secretary of State, Salesian Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone of Genoa.

Bertone takes over on Sept. 15, replacing Sodano.

"I see in the new secretary of state three new characteristics," Navarro-Valls said.

"First, he's an academic," Navarro-Valls said, referring to Bertone's background as a professor and administrator at both the Salesian University in Rome and also the Lateran University.

"Second, he's a person who knows how to make decisions, and third, he has a great sense of humor."

All three characteristics, Navarro-Valls said, "don't seem to me insignificant for a new secretary of state."

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The archbishop of Bucaramanga in Colombia, Juan Vicente Córdoba, told reporters this week that the Colombian bishops have asked Pope Benedict XVI to visit the country. The visit would be in conjunction with the pope's projected May 2007 trip to Brazil for a meeting of CELAM, the umbrella organization of Latin American bishops' conferences.

The purpose of the visit, according to Córdoba, would be to promote peace and reconciliation in Colombia, where internal conflict has claimed more than 35,000 lives since 1990. Large sections of the country are under the control of guerilla movements or para-military organizations, in some cases linked to narcotics traffickers.

If the trip materializes, it would mark Joseph Ratzinger's fourth visit to Colombia. His first came in 1972, as a young theologian, to lead seminars for clergy and laity on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). He visited again in 1982 and 1988 as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

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According to press reports in Chile, a well-known priest of the Don Orione Fathers has been found guilty by a criminal court of the sexual abuse of two minors aged 13 and 17, who, according to court documents, suffered from severe mental disabilities.

News reports indicate that the finding against Fr. Jorge Enrique Galaz Espinoza will be formally published Aug. 11. Prosecutors have asked for a prison sentence of 15-20 years.

The case comes on the heels of the June 29 sentencing of another Chilean priest, Fr. Antonio Larra'n Pérez-Cotapos, to 300 days in a military prison for the sexual abuse of a nine-year-old female student at the Colegio Mar'a Auxiliadora school.

Galaz Espinoza, 43, is the former director of a Chilean charitable organization called Hogar Pequeño Cottolengo. He has maintained his innocence, telling the court, "I am not guilty of any of the acts imputed to me."

His lawyers suggested the accusations against Galaz Espinoza may have come from a small group of disgruntled employees unhappy with the positions he assigned them. The Don Orione Fathers in Chile have supported Galaz Espinoza.

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