

Bishop: We didn't do all that much in Baltimore

Joshua J. McElwee | Nov. 14, 2013 NCR Today
Fall bishops' meeting 2013

The U.S. bishops did little actual business during their annual plenary assembly in Baltimore this week, one bishop and former associate and general secretary of the bishops' conference wrote.

In years past, says St. Petersburg, Fla., Bishop Robert Lynch, the bishops "struggled" to fit a full agenda into a three day time-frame.

This time, he states: "Other than approving some necessary liturgical texts, giving permission to a committee to develop a pastoral statement on pornography, we didn't do a lot to advance the kingdom of God on earth -- at least publicly."

Lynch, who served in his roles at the conference from 1984 to 1995, made the statement about this year's assembly [in a posting](#) [1] at his personal diocesan blog.

The bishops met for their annual assembly at a Baltimore hotel Monday through Wednesday. Sessions Monday and Tuesday morning were open to the press while the rest were held behind closed doors during so-called executive sessions.

Lynch criticized the bishops for hosting those meetings in private, saying they prevent people from hearing the prelates' arguments and debates.

"There have been many times in recent years when I wished that God's people could hear the debate and the engagement of their bishops on many of the topics in the Executive Sessions," he wrote. "Some of the best, most thoughtful, charitable debates and discussions have taken place therein."

"There certainly are times and subjects where we need to be in an Executive Session, but that is becoming more the norm than the exception," the bishop continued. "The church suffers, credibility flies out-the-door in certain circles, and can seem to some to be cowardly."

Among the events of the bishops' public sessions this week were addresses from New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Vatican ambassador Archbishop Carlo Viganò, short debates over a series of new liturgical translations, and election of new officers for the conference.

Dolan, who has served as the bishops' president since 2010, stepped down from the role at the end of the meeting. Louisville, Ky., Archbishop Joseph Kurtz was elected as his replacement.

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