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PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Bishops Meet in the Archdiocese June 18-22, 2007

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This week, June 18-22, the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the United States are meeting here in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. This is the first time in our history that the Archdiocese is hosting all the U.S. Bishops. We are deeply honored.

The schedule is different than most meetings in that the Bishops will not be involved in debating and voting on documents and conducting the regular work of the Conference. It will be a retreat format with prayer and discussion on the spiritual and pastoral responsibilities that they have as Shepherds of the flock.

Approximately 225 members of the hierarchy are attending. The meeting itself is of a spiritual nature and is not open to the public. There will be a Vesper Service in the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi on Friday evening, June 22 at 5:00 p.m. Participation is by invitation only. In addition to the Bishops, all priests, deacons and their wives, some religious and a good number of lay leaders have been invited.

Just before Vespers begin, a group of Pueblo Indians will do the Buffalo Dance which is a reverent expression of gratitude to God for His blessings. During the Vespers, there will also be a group of Hermanos (Penitentes) who will sing one of the ancient alabados that came from Spain centuries ago. The rest of the music will be provided by the Cathedral Basilica Choir. There will, of course, be Spanish and English used in the Vesper Service which will be preached by the Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec, Canada – Cardinal Marc Ouelett.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops meets twice a year. The November meeting is held in the Washington, D.C. area and the business of the Conference is conducted during that meeting. There is another meeting in June, such as the one that we are hosting here in the Archdiocese. That meeting is held in different parts of the United States each year. The Second Vatican Council determined that each country must have an Episcopal Conference so that the work of the Church within each country can be coordinated effectively, and always in union with the Holy Father, Successor of Peter.

Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan said:

I have been personally involved with the work of the Conference for many years. From 1970-1976, I was a young priest on the staff of the Bishops Conference in Washington. Then, I was named the founding Bishop of Lubbock in 1983, 24 years ago. I have been involved as Chairman and member of various Committees of the Conference during my years as a Bishop. The Bishops Conference has been a great blessing to the Church and sometimes controversial in the actions that we have taken in our serious responsibility as leaders of the Catholic Church in our Country.

I ask the prayers and support of our clergy, religious and laity for our Bishops, who are Successors to the Apostles, in the challenging ministry that we have in the Church.

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