

People

News in the [December 14, 2004](#) issue

The president of Bob Jones University, a conservative Christian school in South Carolina, has written President **George W. Bush** to say his reelection shows that God has given the nation “a reprieve from the agenda of paganism.” **Bob Jones III** read his November 3 letter to students at a chapel service on the Greenville campus, and it was posted on the school’s Web site. “In your reelection, God has graciously granted America—though she doesn’t deserve it—a reprieve from the agenda of paganism,” he said. Jones suggested that the president remove staffers who don’t agree with his biblical values. “Don’t equivocate. Put your agenda on the front burner and let it boil,” he advised, then went on to say: “You owe the liberals nothing. They despise you because they despise your Christ.” President Bush was criticized for visiting the school during his campaign for president in 2000. At the time, the school had a ban on interracial dating, which it has since dropped, and was known for its belief that the pope is the Antichrist.

William Skylstad of Spokane, a soft-spoken bishop whose Washington state diocese plans to declare bankruptcy, was elected in mid-November as leader of the nation’s Roman Catholic bishops. Skylstad, 70, who has said his diocese cannot afford to pay “tens of millions” to settle abuse-related lawsuits, expects his diocese to follow those of Portland, Oregon, and Tucson, Arizona, as the third U.S. diocese to seek bankruptcy protection this year. While Skylstad refused interview requests, Tom Reese, editor of the Jesuit magazine *America*, said the bankruptcy that will likely overshadow Skylstad’s tenure is a sign of the times for the scandal-scarred American church. Skylstad has been groomed for the top post since he was elected vice president in 2001. Although he was elected on the first ballot, he won just 52 percent of the vote.