

# **With flower-petal ‘snow,’ Cardinal Law leads Mass at St. Mary Major**

ROME – Romans and pilgrims, including hundreds of German altar servers in Rome for a pilgrimage, packed the Basilica of St. Mary Major to mark the feast of the church’s dedication and to watch “snow” fall from the ceiling.

The Mass was celebrated as normal Aug. 5 by U.S. Cardinal Bernard F. Law, archpriest of the basilica, even though three U.S.-based groups who represent victims of clerical sex abuse had asked the cardinal to step aside and called on Pope Benedict XVI to remove him from office.

The groups made their appeals in a public statement Aug. 4.

Cardinal Law resigned as archbishop of Boston in 2002 amid criticism of his handling of clergy sex abuse cases; Pope John Paul II named him archpriest of St. Mary Major in 2004.

During the singing of the “Gloria” at the beginning of the Mass, two basilica employees hiding in the space between the coffered ceiling and the roof moved one of the ceiling panels and released thousands of white flower petals on worshippers.

The feast of the basilica’s dedication is also the feast of Our Lady of the Snows, commemorating the tradition that says Mary indicated where she wanted the basilica built using the miracle of an August snow in Rome.

No protesters were seen at the Mass or outside the basilica, and during the liturgy the cardinal made no mention of the U.S. groups’ appeal.