

# Pope Calls for Refugee Aid

New York — (RNS) — Pope Paul in his annual Ash Wednesday message to U.S. Catholic school students urged particular support of U.S. Catholic bishops relief efforts for the "innocent victims" of the Pakistan-India conflict in Bangladesh.

The message launched a special Lenten appeal for support of global programs carried on by Catholic Relief Services. The major phase of this appeal occurs on Sunday, March 12, when a special collection will be made in every U.S. parish.

Noting the past generosity of American children through sacrifice and self-denial, the Pope said "Your offerings have made it possible to bring food, clothing and medicines to poor children in many countries. For many this is their only source of aid.

"We are especially alarmed today with the situation in India and Pakistan," the Pope said, explaining that millions of human beings in Bangladesh were displaced by civil war and must be restored to their homes.

He explained that life in ref-

ugee camps is harsh and that "death and disease are ever present." The Pope observed that aid from America through the bishops' relief effort had helped alleviate the situation, but he added that "further help must come from around the world."

Urging the Catholic school children to "continue to show Christian love," Pope Paul said "we cannot forget the poor of other lands in Asia, in Africa and Latin America."

"As you begin to make your Lenten sacrifices," he continued, "you should think of how each little donation may keep some child alive or make his future a better one.

"When you help the work of Catholic Relief Overseas Aid Fund, you are doing God's work. You are showing your love for your neighbor and for Christ himself."

The annual appeal provides the basic support for the worldwide aid and development programs conducted by CRS and for other overseas aid efforts conducted by the U.S. bishops.

The Catholic agency is one of the principal groups now providing aid and rehabilitation to the refugees and victims of the recent conflict in Bangladesh, helping to maintain refugee camps and assisting in the resettlement of refugees in their homeland.

# Prisoners' Rights Bill Launched

New York — (RNS) — An appeal for a national "Bill of Rights for Prisoners" was launched here as some 450 religious, racial, business, labor and civic leaders endorsed a statement on human rights for prison inmates aimed at preventing future "Attica" tragedies.

The statement was sent to governors of all 50 states, state attorneys-general, leaders of state legislatures, the U.S. attorney general and congressional leaders.

Atty. Gen. J. Shane Creamer of Pennsylvania last December issued such a bill of rights for the state's prisons, but it has yet to be approved by the state legislature.

The 50-state campaign for prisoner rights is sponsored by the National Alliance on Shaping Safer Cities, a New York-based coalition of civic, religious, social and business groups dedicated to "making the criminal justice system fair and just."

The statement calls on the federal government and all states "to adopt the United Nations standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners."

These rules, the statement explains, "prohibit racial or religious discrimination, require separation of untried and convicted inmates as well as separating youthful offenders from hardened criminals."

While prohibiting "corporal punishment" such as handcuffs or chains, the rules declared that "no punishment shall be imposed unless the inmate has been informed of the offense alleged against him and given the proper opportunity for presenting his defense."

"We must not allow the tragedy of Attica to move us to repression," the statement declared.

"Instead we must intensify speedy reforms, so that prisons will no longer create embittered, angry, hopeless people, but rather a real force in the process of rehabilitation."

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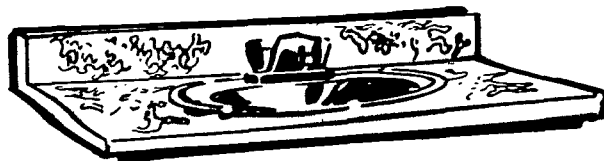
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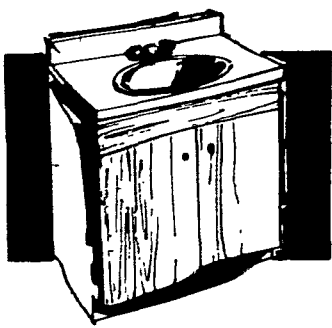


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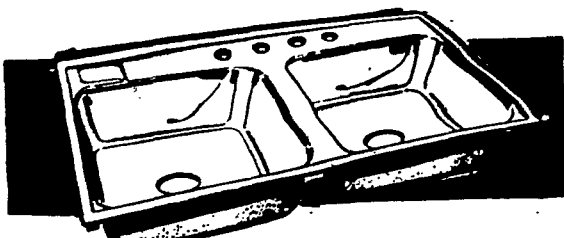
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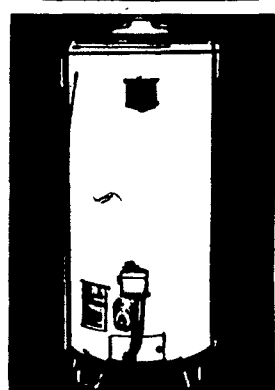
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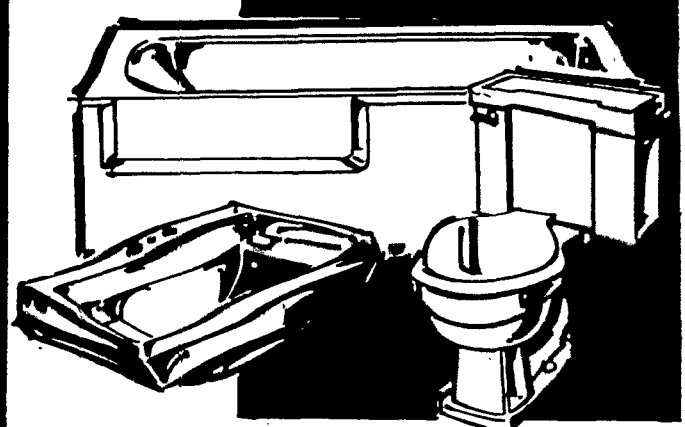
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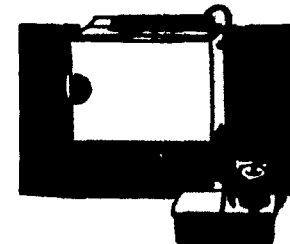
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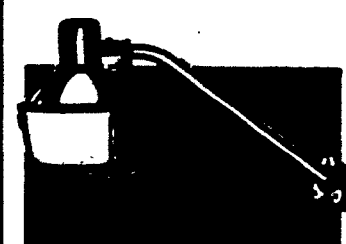
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