

Pontiff Opens Preparatory Phase of Holy Year

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul VI called on Roman Catholics throughout the world to follow a program of spiritual renewal and reconciliation as he opened the preparatory phase of the Church's 1975 Holy Year on Pentecost Sunday.

Speaking to several thousand

people gathered in St. Peter's Square, the Pope also appealed for reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

"This is a great day," said the pontiff, "because it marks the beginning of the (spiritual) preparations for the coming

Holy Year — a year of spiritual renewal."

The formal beginning of the preparatory phase of the Holy Year observance was celebrated on Pentecost in Catholic dioceses everywhere.

In a renewed plea for peace in

strife-torn Northern Ireland, Pope Paul referred to a worldwide day of prayer for Ireland (June 10), jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Vatican's Secretariat for Christian Unity.

"Let us pray for that country

which is so dear to us, and which is still disturbed and suffering," he urged, and remarked:

"Prayers for Northern Ireland fit in very well in the Holy Year program of spiritual regeneration and reconciliation."

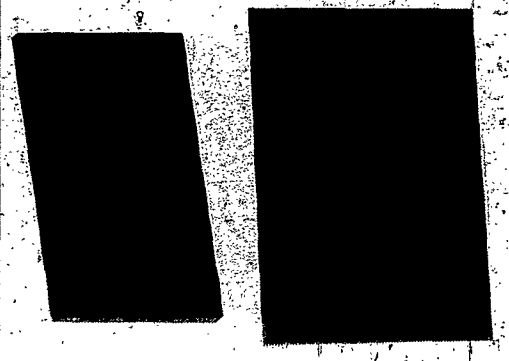
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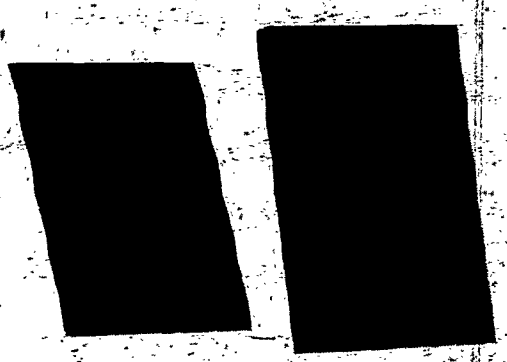
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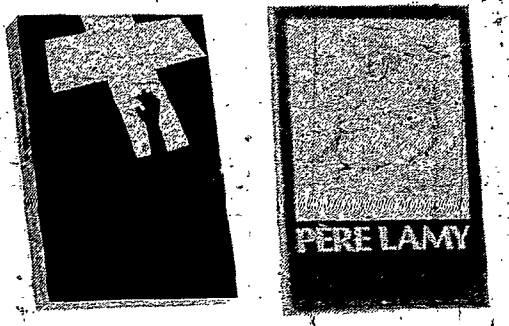
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