

Religious Leaders of One Voice in Shooting

By Religious News Service

American religious leaders were of one voice in decrying the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II and in calling people of all faiths to pray for his recovery.

Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish leaders emphasized the pontiff's importance in the quest for world peace and his witness against a terrorism of which he has become victim.

Rochester native Bishop Thomas Kelly, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference, said, "All of us are just shattered that a world leader with such personal integrity, who has taken world leadership in justice and peace, should be attacked."

Said Archbishop James Roach, president of the USCC, "Once more the tragic spiral of violence that has so often engulfed the world has reached out not just to harm the leader of the Church, but to sadden all persons of goodwill."

The Governing Board of the National Council of Churches, meeting in Philadelphia, deplored the "irrational action." The delegates gave thanks that the pope's life was spared, and prayed that "despite instances of evil, terror, and violence, the goodness and peace to which the pope has dedicated his life will triumph in the world, through the victory won by Jesus Christ."

Howard M. Squadron, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, commented, "Every creed and color and country is wounded by the attack on Pope John Paul II, for he embodies qualities of gentleness and humanity that have made him a beloved figure around the globe."

Archbishop Iakovos, head of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas and primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, was in Greece when the assassination attempt took place in Vatican City. "This was a most shameful and atrocious act of violence against the beloved spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church," he said in a statement relayed to New York.

"Out of this tragic experience, we trust that all Americans and all members of the human family will take a new and determined stand against all manifestations of religious hatred and senseless violence," said Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Conference.

Presiding Bishop John M. Allin of the Episcopal Church said, "The shooting attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II diminishes the quality of human life and saddens the hearts of all Christians. John Paul II has exemplified the finest characteristics of Christian witness. His warmth, love and concern for people of all walks of life make him a living symbol of the good



Bishop Clark offered Mass for the wounded Pope John Paul II last Thursday night at the Cathedral.



shepherd he follows and obeys. I am grieved and distressed by this atrocious act and ask that all people pray for his speedy recovery."

Bishop H. Elis Finger, Knoxville, Tenn., president, Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church:

"For the whole United Methodist community I express profound shock and grief over the attempted assassination of John Paul II. With the whole of the Christian community and other religious groups I join in prayer for this distinguished man of God and for the Church he so ably administers."

The Rev. Charles A. Hammond, Moderator, and William P. Thompson, stated clerk, United Presbyterian Church:

"Speaking for United Presbyterians everywhere, we express our grief at the shooting of Pope John Paul II. We pray for him and for our sisters and brothers of the Roman Catholic Church; and we pray that all God's people may join together to overcome such senseless violence, against which the pontiff himself has so valiantly witnessed."

Bishop James R. Crumley, Jr., president of the Lutheran Church in America:

"The members of the Lutheran Church in America express their dismay at the shooting of Pope John Paul II. With our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church, we pray for his speedy recovery."

Cardinal Humberto Medeiros, Boston:

"My immediate reaction

was a mixture of shock, sickness, and sadness. Then I asked: if this man, so strong a force for goodness, justice, and peace, is attacked, who then among us is safe? What a tragic example of the dwindling regard and respect for human life.

"But then when I am reminded that when we remove God from the center of our lives, the vacuum is only too easily filled with evil or madness. I plead for prayers from every generous heart, regardless of faith, that God will restore to his people this gift which is Pope John Paul II, the servant of the servants of God."

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president, Union of American Hebrew Congregations:

"We are profoundly saddened and shocked by the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II, a man whose personal qualities of humility and loving kindness have endeared him to men and women of every race and every creed. We join the Catholic world and men and women of goodwill everywhere in praying for his full and speedy recovery."

Rabbi Henry I. Siegman, executive director, American Jewish Congress:

"We are shocked and outraged by the attack on His Holiness, Pope Paul II, one of the world's great religious leaders. We pray for his speedy recovery and for the end of the hate and sickness which have in recent years increased violence and terrorism in the world."

Dr. David Hyatt, president, National Conference of Christians and Jews:

"A president and now a pope. Why? Let the people of all religious faiths join in prayer for an end to the senseless shootings and taking of human lives that have become a worldwide contagion."

William G. Tanner, president, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board:

We in the U.S. have had more than our share of assassination attempts on political leaders; but it is even more tragic when this sickness spreads from the political area into an attack on one of the world's great religious leaders. We are praying that God in his ultimate power will intervene and bring an end to the sickness of violence that is eating away at the world like a cancer from within."

G. Brownlow Hastings, associate director of the Interfaith Witness Department, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board:

"We call upon all Christians to pray for his speedy recovery. We share his concern for spiritual renewal for all Christian communions and for the cause of world peace and justice."

Evangelist Billy Graham:

"I am deeply shocked and profoundly saddened by the senseless shooting of Pope John Paul II today. My thoughts are with him, and I join with millions of Christians of all

backgrounds in fervently praying for his swift, complete and permanent recovery. This event is a tragic illustration of the moral and spiritual chaos

which infects our world. It also forcefully reminds us of the need for spiritual renewal in our world, toward which Christians must pray and work."

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