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HOW DO WE HANDLE IT?

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The horrifying news of the discovery of the massacre of innocents at a refugee camp in Lebanon was simply devastating to many. It was difficult to continue through the paces of everyday routine under the shadow of such revelation.

For many, it also raised some questions of faith — How could something like this happen? How could God allow it?

Is there any redeeming hope in the face of such barbarism? Is there a thread of grace to escape the pit of despair?

With such thoughts in mind, the staff of the Courier-Journal contacted some diocesans, in a variety of pertinent positions, to provide their thoughts. They spoke of the need for peace and justice, the search for meaning and the possible message for us all.

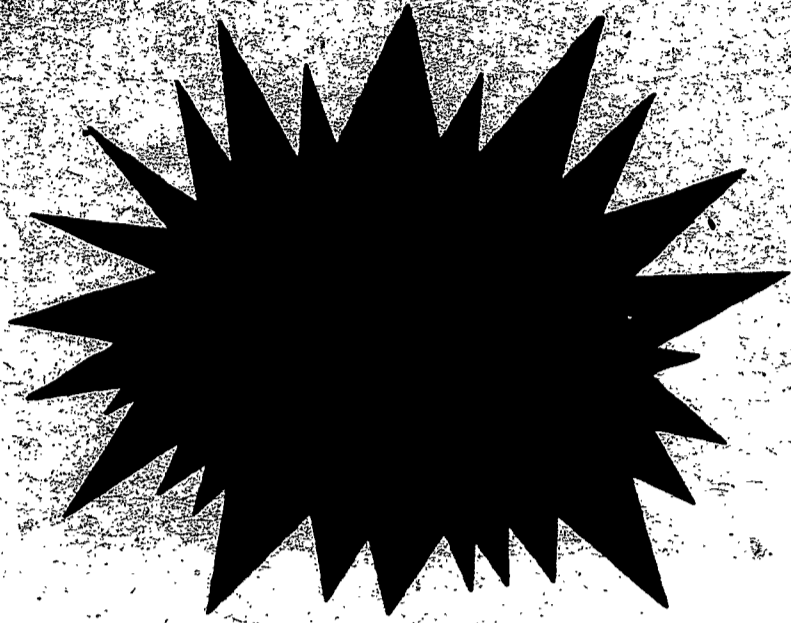
Sister Molly Brown, SSJ, is director of Spirit House, a therapeutic community for nuns. She said that the tragedy left us "only questions."

"The men, women and children of Sabra and Shatila are refugees no longer. Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, these innocents went to their promised home, violently though the going was," Sister Brown said.

"For those of us who are left behind, witnesses to the tragedy and waste, there are only questions. Paul Tillich speaks for us: 'There is one answer to these questions — the eternal . . . He who was and is and is to come — He gives us forgiveness for what is past; courage for what is to come — He gives us rest in His eternal presence. He answers the questions.'"

Father Donald F. Schwab is chaplain at Rochester General Hospital. He is currently reading Rabbi Harold

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'Terrible Manifestation Of the Forces of Evil And the Spiral of Violence'

. . . Pope John Paul II

By Father Kenneth J. Doyle
NC News Service

Caracas — In strong and emotional language, Pope John Paul II condemned the killings of Palestinians in refugee camps in Beirut, saying that such crimes "disgust the human and Christian conscience."

Initial Red Cross estimates said that more than 600 people died in several refugee camps in West Beirut. Many press reports cited eyewitnesses and Western diplomats who attributed the killings to Christian-led Lebanese militia groups which

broke into homes and sprayed occupants with machinegun fire. The killings occurred Sept. 17-18.

Speaking Sept. 19 to 15,000 visitors in the village square here, the pope said, "With a soul filled with bitterness and deep sorrow, I learned the news of the horrendous massacre carried out in the Palestinian camps of Beirut."

"One hears reports of hundreds and hundreds of victims — babies, women, elderly people — put to death in a ruthless way," the pope said, his voice subdued and sad.



Beirut women pass by massacred countryman. (NC photo).

"There are no words adequate to condemn such crimes that disgust the human and Christian conscience."

He continued: "How can one not be seriously worried in the face of the terrible manifestation of the forces of evil and the spiral of violence expanding in the world?"

"I pray to the omnipotent God to grant eternal peace to the victims," the pontiff added, "and I ask the merciful Lord to

have pity on our humanity that has fallen to such an excess of barbarism."

Urging new efforts toward a Mideast settlement, the pope said, "I pray that God enlighten and lead the minds of people and of their responsible authorities so that they might succeed in breaking this chain of struggle and of rancor and begin again with renewed effort dialogue and negotiations to reach a hoped for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East."

Pope Asks Mutual Recognition By Palestinians, Israelis

Vatican City (NC) — Peace will never come to the Middle East until Israelis and Palestinians recognize each other's rights and identity. Pope John Paul told 20,000 pilgrims in St. Peter's Square Sept. 15, shortly after meeting with Yasser Arafat, Palestine Liberation Organization leader.

The pope excoriated the violent killings the day before of Lebanon's President-elect

Gemayel, whom he referred to as "a prestigious young man." The pope said he "could not hide" his worries about the possible consequences for Lebanon of Gemayel's death and asked "all Lebanese, Christians and non-Christians . . . to strengthen their bonds, to unite themselves for the good of the country and absolutely not to yield to reactions of violence and division."

Without mentioning

specific proposals for Mideast peace, such as that offered by U.S. President Ronald Reagan, the pope told the audience that recent weeks had been marked by "a flourishing of plans for relaunching negotiations and opening the way for a global solution to the conflict in the Middle East."

The pope said that "the Holy See is convinced above all that there will not be true peace without justice, and that there will not be able to be justice if there are not recognized and accepted, in a stable mode, fair and equal, the rights of all the people involved."

Included in these rights, the pontiff said, "is that of existence and security on one's own territory, in safeguarding the proper identity of each one."

He said that both Israelis and Palestinians had seen "simultaneously or alternately their rights assaulted or denied," and that "the pope and the Catholic Church look with sympathy and consideration toward both these peoples."

Cardinal Cooke Archbishop Roach

'Pray That Violence Will Be Rejected'

New York (NC) — Two leading U.S. bishops expressed shock at the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Beirut and have urged "immediate steps" in bringing an end to the conflict in Lebanon.

In a joint statement issued Sept. 19, Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis and Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York said the lives of the victims had ended "cruelly and pointlessly."

Noting that scenes from the refugee camps had been televised in the United States, they said, "The terrifying screams of grieving women convey to us a message of horror and desperation."

Archbishop Roach is president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; Cardinal Cooke is president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, although he was said to be speaking in this instance only as archbishop of New York City.

The Catholic agency has been providing Lebanon with emergency supplies in the wake of this summer's Israeli invasion.

The two bishops stated, "We continue our prayers to Almighty God that their grief and suffering will come to an end, that violence will be rejected for the utter senselessness that it represents, and that steps will be taken that will lead to peace and justice for all the Lebanese and Palestinian people, and security and freedom for the citizens of all the countries of the Middle East . . ."

"No matter who was responsible for this gross human atrocity, we know that the vast majority of the people of Lebanon of all faiths share the grief and the terror of the families of the victims of this latest massacre . . ."

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