

Justice Questions Provide Key to Pope's Trip

Pope John Paul II's March 2-9 trip to Central America and Haiti brought him into direct confrontation with some of the region's most pressing issues: violence, human rights, the need for dialogue and the role of the Church in alleviating social problems.

And it provided a forum for him to deliver strong messages of peace and justice to nations — such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Haiti — divided by unrest, controversy or civil war.

- In Costa Rica he told Central American youth that they "have to create a better world than that of your ancestors" because if they don't, "the blood will continue to run and tomorrow tears will give witness to the sorrow of your children."

- In Nicaragua, where he was greeted by anti-American words from a leader of the ruling Marxist Sandinista junta and later interrupted by chanting critics during Mass, he called on the Church to remain independent of partisan political ideologies and in public scolded a priest who has defied papal authority to remain a part of the junta.

- In El Salvador, he asked the people to "overcome the obstacles to dialogue," said that priests and bishops should promote reconciliation and observed that people want to live "far from terror and in a climate of democratic co-existence."

- In Panama, he criticized contraception, abortion and sterilization and told peasants they should not turn to violence to fight injustice because it "is not the route of Jesus Christ, or of the Church, or your Christian faith."

- In Guatemala, where three days before the pope's arrival the government had executed six men despite the Holy See's plea for clemency, he condemned violence and discrimination against Indians and the Church.

- In Honduras, emphasizing religious themes, he



The pope kneels in prayer at the memorial to martyred Archbishop Romero.

asked Mary to make "fighting cease" and "hatreds end forever."

- And in Haiti, he rebuked the regime of Haitian president-for-life Jean-Claude Duvalier, criticizing such social ills as "divisions, injustices, excessive inequality," and declaring, "It is certainly necessary for things to change."

The pontiff arrived in Costa Rica March 2 and the next day met with President Luis Alberto Monge and various groups. His open-air Mass drew an estimated 500,000 people. His dramatic plea for an end to violence came in a speech to several thousand young people gathered at the stadium. He urged them "as a brother and friend, to fight with all the energy of your youth against hate and violence."

Some of the most tumultuous events of the trip

occurred in Managua, Nicaragua, where political overtones were apparent from the moment the pope's plane landed.

Daniel Ortega, coordinator of the ruling Sandinista junta, greeted the pope with a denunciation of the United States.

Not commenting directly on American foreign policy, the pontiff said he brought a message of peace to "those who, inside or outside this geographic area ... favor in one form or another ideological, economic or military tensions" which hinder free development.

A shouting match occurred during the pope's homily at an open air Mass in Managua's central square, ringed by huge pro-Sandinista signs. Sandinista youths in the huge plaza, which was packed with about 300,000 people, began chanting "We want peace" to

drown out other shouts of "We want the pope."

Although the pontiff sought silence and shouted back that "the only hope for peace is in the Church," the chanting continued. Despite that opposition, however, Pope John Paul's calls for Church independence from partisan political ideologies and movements drew heavy applause from others in the crowd.

In his homily, the pope asked for Church unity through "obedience to the bishops and to the pope."

Referring to five priests who hold high government posts, Pope John Paul said: "No Christian, especially those with titles signifying a special consecration in the Church, should become responsible for breaking this unity, acting outside or against the will of the Church."

During his visit to war-torn El Salvador March 6, the pope outlined a Church plan for dialogue and said the clergy should support reconciliation. He also said it is not worth it for priests to die fighting as guerrillas.

The dialogue the Church seeks "is not a tactical truce to fortify positions as part of a plan to continue the fighting," he said. Rather, "It is a sincere effort" to address "the anguish, pain, weariness, fatigue of so many who long for peace."

A contrast to the events in Nicaragua and the visit to a nation at war, El Salvador, was the pontiff's peaceful visit to Panama, March 5. He was greeted by Archbishop Marcos McGrath of Panama City, who said Panamanians had been shocked by the "disrespect and irreverence" the pontiff had encountered in Nicaragua. The pope's Mass drew some 250,000 people.

His message touched on marriage and family life and he urged his listeners to say "no to sterilization, especially when imposed on any person or ethnic group for fraudulent reasons; no to contraception and no to the crime of abortion, which kills innocent human beings."

During a meeting with several thousand campesinos (peasants), he again urged peace and rejected violence, telling them that "you cannot let yourselves be dragged down by the temptation of violence of the armed guerrilla or of the egotistical battle of the classes, because this is not the route of Jesus Christ, or of the Church, or of your Christian faith."

In Guatemala, the pontiff condemned violence and discrimination against Indians and the Church.

The pope's words were a harsh criticism of the government of Guatemala President Efraim Rios Montt, accused last year by the nation's Catholic bishops of "genocide" against the predominantly Indian peasant population.

More than a million people saw the pope during his stops at Guatemala City and Quezaltenango.

The pope's Mass in Guatemala City came immediately after a chilly private meeting with Rios Montt.

"When a man is trampled, when his rights are violated, when flagrant injustices are committed against him, when he undergoes tortures, when he is violated, a crime and a very grave offense against God is committed," he said. "Remember that every man is your brother and be converted into respectful defenders of his dignity. And beyond any social, political, ideological, racial and religious difference, the life of your brother, of each man, must always be assured above all."

In Honduras, the pontiff asked Mary to "make fighting cease" and "hatreds end forever" throughout Central America.

At a mass outside the shrine of our Lady of Suyapa, the pope entrusted all of Central America to the care of the Madonna.

The pontiff emphasized ecumenism at a Mass in Belize, March 9. An estimated one-fifth of the nation's population turned out for the pope's visit. In his talk, he criticized methods used by some U.S.-based fundamentalist groups in Latin America. He cited "an aggressive proselytism that disturbs and hurts — sometimes even with unworthy procedures — the degree of unity which an ecclesial community already possesses."

The pope ended his trip in Haiti, March 9, by telling the government of dynast Jean-Claude Duvalier that changes must come to the nation, the poorest in the western hemisphere.

The pontiff cited: "Divisions, injustices, excessive inequality, the degradation of the quality of life, misery, hunger, the fear of many people."

200 Attend Final Assumption Mass

Some 200 parishioners attended the 9:30 a.m. Mass last Saturday at the Church of the Assumption, Fairport, marking the final celebration to be held in the 100-year-old structure.

Following the Mass, an informal procession took place from the old church to the new one on the south-most part of the property. A statue of the Blessed Mother was moved to a spot in the foyer of the new church, as well as the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament to a small chapel in the new building.

The current structure seats 700, with standing room for some 300 more, making capacity about 1,000. The old church seated 300. According to parish officials, the old structure will be leveled sometime after Easter.

Later that afternoon, the

first Mass was celebrated in the new church. According to Father John Norris, pastor, the church will be formally dedicated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark on Sunday, May 15.

Another historic occasion for the parish was on Sunday, Feb. 27, when seven babies were the last group to be baptized in the old church.

That brought the number of those baptized to 4,913 since 1883. Amazingly, in the group were great-grandchildren of some of the parish's pioneers: Carrie Ann Stolt, daughter of Albert and Karen Stolt; James Charles Kenny, son of Peter and Patricia Kenny; and David John Poletti, son of David and Gerianne Poletti.

Others baptized in the final group were: Jenna Joo Lee Breen, daughter of Richard and Ann Breen;



The procession nears the doors of the new church.

William Francis Baretzky, son of Thomas and Amelia Baretzky; Stephen Anthony Esposito, son of Dominic and

Camilla Esposito; and the last baptized, Jacob Colin Tara, son of Stanley and Katherine Tara.



Photos by Terrance J. Brennan

Members of Assumption Parish joined in an informal procession to the new church, carrying various articles, including this statue of the Blessed Mother.