

# GRENADA

## Religious Leaders Thank U.S. Military

Vatican City (NC) -- A message signed by Grenadian religious leaders, including Catholic Bishop Sydney Charles of St. George, has thanked the American-led military force for its intervention on the island, Vatican Radio reported Nov. 8.

The message from the Grenada Conference of Churches described the October invasion as an answer to a "call for help." The statement was read in Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches on the island, Vatican Radio said.

"Our thanks goes to all those who did what was possible to respond to the appeal of the governor general, and in particular to the forces of the United States and Caribbean states who responded to a call for help," the message said.

The group designated Nov. 13 as a national day of prayer, and expressed condolences for victims of the fighting and their families.

"With the help of God, we must make our country a place of peace, based on justice, truth, love and freedom," the statement said. The religious leaders also met with Governor General Sir Paul Scoon to discuss the situation in Grenada, Vatican Radio said.

Scoon has called for elections in the country within a year and has announced plans to form an interim government.

Another religious group, the Council of Churches of the nearby island nation of Barbados, defined the invasion as "a decisive action to liberate the people of Grenada from a reign of terror," Vatican Radio said.

The report added that Grenada's Presbyterian leaders have said that condemnations of the military action by non-Grenadians ignored the sentiments of those who live in Grenada.

## Cardinal Bernardin Expresses Doubts

Washington (NC) -- Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago said Nov. 9 he has "serious reservations" about the recent U.S. military intervention in Grenada.

"I have serious questions I would ask" about the intervention, the cardinal said during a press conference after he received the 1983 Albert Einstein Peace Prize.

"The response to Grenada must be seen in a broader context -- a military solution to the situation does not seem to be in the best interest of either country," he said.

At the award luncheon, Paul Warnke, chief U.S. negotiator in the SALT II talks, presented the cardinal with the Einstein prize -- a bronze plaque and a check for \$50,000.

Cardinal Bernardin was selected for the award because of his work in preparation of the National Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace.

The cardinal likened the situation in Grenada to that of Central America, an area in which he said the U.S. bishops favor a political solution over a military one.

He said that he made his remarks about Grenada without having "access to all the facts" and that the intervention had wide popular support among Americans.

During the award luncheon, the Albert Einstein Peace Prize Foundation announced plans for a July 1984 world day of prayer. The cardinal endorsed the day of prayer in his 30-minute acceptance address.

He prefaced the address by reading a note he had received on his way to Washington from another airline passenger, a woman who was coming to the capital for a ceremony honoring her son, a Marine who was killed in Beirut, Lebanon.

The woman wrote that it was "in God's plan" for her to meet the cardinal on his way to accept a prize for peace because her son gave the "necessary dedication" for there to be peace -- "his life."



In Sauteurs, Grenada, Rubina Rennie stands in the doorway of her home beneath pictures of Jesus Christ and Fidel Castro. Life on the small Caribbean island started returning to normal as shops and schools reopened and U.S. troops began to withdraw. (NC Photo)

The pope said that in promoting justice in Guatemala the church has to confront "persistent structures of social injustice." But he added that the church should keep itself "above the confrontations of political groups and parties."

"The church's choice of nonviolence does not signify passivity, nor silent complicity with sin, injustice and suffering" but represents "an active commitment to justice and peace," the pope said.

The pope said he was responding to a joint message he received from Argentine and Chilean bishops Oct. 12.

He called the Oct. 12 message "an evident sign of the profound hopes of the two peoples" who want "an official agreement as soon as possible."

The pope said that through the work of the church leaders, final negotiations are now possible toward a solution "that satisfies both sides and reflects my proposal of Dec. 12, 1980."

The pope's letter, dated Oct. 28, was published in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano Nov. 7.

Pope John Paul agreed to mediate the dispute, which involves three small islands off the southern tip of South America, after both countries threatened to go to war over the issue in December 1978.

The Vatican has not made public papal proposals for settlement of the dispute.

## EL SALVADOR

### 'Expected to Be Killed', Missionary Declares

St. PAUL, Minn. (NC) -- A missionary who spent 10 years in El Salvador says the constant killing in that country made him expect his own death at any minute.

"When you come to a place like that and see so many people you know who are killed -- the archbishop, my (parish) boys, several of my catechists -- you feel constantly under a threat," said Father Paul Schindler, who served at La Libertad, El Salvador, from 1972-82 as part of a mission team from the Cleveland diocese.

"You get to a threshold, a point where you say, 'I don't care if they kill me,'" he said.

He said he "expected to be killed" and reached the point where every time he went out he would say, "Well, Lord, here I come."

Among the people the priest knew who were killed while he was in El Salvador were Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay volunteer Jean Donovan.

But he said these deaths, which received international attention, were only a few in a long line of executions he witnessed.

Death squads at one point after a 1979 coup were found to have compiled a list "of over 1,000 people to be killed, including priests and nuns," Father Schindler said.

"There have to be at least 15-20 death squads operating because there's usually 30-40 people killed a night in El Salvador," he said.

"They have a file on them and they enter their homes at night and tell them why they are killing them and they kill them and then they mutilate them, usually in front of their families," he said.

## BRAZIL

### Top Military Court Upholds Sentences of French Priests

Sao Paulo, Brazil (NC) -- A decision by Brazil's top military court to uphold the long prison sentences against two French priests involved in a controversial land dispute situation has surprised supporters of the clergymen.

Church officials had called their original trial and conviction in June 1982 an effort to discredit the church's work with rural squatters claiming title to land under laws recognizing de facto possession of the disputed land.

Friends of the priests had even planned a fireworks display to celebrate their expected release from jail after the case was reviewed in October by the Supreme Military Tribunal.

There also had been widespread optimism among the lawyers representing the two priests and the 13 squatters accused of involvement in an ambush in the Amazonian state of Para in which one person was killed and several policemen and agrarian officials were wounded.

The optimism had been created by recent changes in the political climate as the military government promised to relax its stiff national security laws under which the priests were tried. In addition, rules of evidence had been modified, which allowed a case more favorable to the defense, and several generals considered unsympathetic to the priests had resigned from the Supreme Military Tribunal.

But the court voted seven to six in late October to uphold the sentences of the priests and squatters. This means a 10-year prison term for Father Aristades Camio and an eight-year term for Father Francois Gouriou, the two French missionaries involved in the case. One of the squatters received an eight-year sentence and the rest seven-year sentences.

Documents released by the Catholic Church about the trial have continually stressed that the decision to try the priests was an attempt to put the church's work with squatters on trial.

## NICARAGUA

### Draft Law Differences Worsens Church-State Rift

Managua, Nicaragua (NC) -- Criticism by the Nicaraguan bishops of the Sandinista government's military conscription law has heated up church-state tensions to the point where Sandinista groups have prevented Sunday Masses in several churches and the bishops, to protest government harassment, ordered Masses cancelled on a religious holiday.

A key issue is the bishops' call to conscientious objection in a country where 90 percent of the 2.8 million population professes Catholicism.

The bishops' criticism also has highlighted the splits within the Catholic Church regarding the Marxist-influenced Sandinista government as numerous church groups have defended the law as necessary because of the U.S.-financed contra war.

"Evidently, this is an open persecution of the church in Nicaragua and, consequently we are worried," said Father Bismarck Carballo, spokesman for Archbishop Miguel Obando Bravo of Managua, Nicaragua. He spoke after two priests were deported Nov. 1 for alleged opposition to the law, at least eight churches were forced to cancel Sunday Masses Oct. 30 by government supporters and Auxiliary Bishop Bosco Vivas Robelo of Managua was beaten up.

In protest the bishops ordered Masses cancelled on Nov. 2, All Soul's Day, when Nicaraguans traditionally gather at churches and cemeteries to honor the dead.

Archbishop Obando Bravo called the Sandinista harassment which forced cancellation of the Oct. 30 Masses "a sad spectacle" causing "an afternoon of hell."

A Sandinista group called "Las Turbas" prevented the Masses at churches where they said the pastors were opposed to the law. They were also accused by church officials of beating up Bishop Vivas Robelo when he tried to enter one of the churches.

"Las Turbas" is Spanish for "the crowds that stir things up."

The harassment came after Defense Minister Humberto Ortega criticized "the reactionary clergy" who oppose the law and said Archbishop Obando Bravo, the key bishop opposing the government, is being "used by American imperialism."

The archbishop denied that he is a tool of the government opponents.

"Archbishop Obando is no politician," he said Nov. 6.

The conscription law, decreed in September after the provisions had been made public for national debate, requires men aged 18 to 40 to register for military service so they can be mobilized for active duty or placed in the reserves. The government said the law is necessary because the country is threatened by guerrillas based in neighboring Honduras and Costa Rica.

## GUATEMALA

### Guatemalan Bishops Get Papal Advice, Caution

Vatican City (NC) -- Pope John Paul II told a group of Guatemalan bishops Nov. 5 that they should continue to work actively for peace and justice but warned that the church's work must never be mixed with subversion.

The pope, meeting with 14 Guatemalan bishops who were making their official five-year visits to Rome, said that defending human dignity and speaking out against civil rights abuses was an essential part of the church's mission.

He urged the bishops to promote justice and the common good, "above all for the poorest people."

He also recalled difficulties encountered by the Guatemalan church during several years of political violence. Some pastors, he said, have had to leave their respective communities.

He referred to the "long list of priests and members of religious families who, in their witness to faith and service to the people, have paid with blood and with detention a grave and unjustified tribute to violence."

Pope John Paul repeated the distinction he made during his March 1983 trip to Guatemala, telling the bishops never to "confuse authentic evangelization with subversion."