

World, Nation, People . . . in Brief

World

Pope to Visit Switzerland

Fribourg, Switzerland -- Pope John Paul II's trip to Switzerland June 12-17 will be marked by ecumenical visits to international Christian organizations and numerous meetings with Swiss Catholics, the Swiss Bishops Conference has announced. The itinerary issued by the conference, headquartered in Fribourg, has not been confirmed by the Vatican press office, which normally announces the official program of papal trips shortly before the pope's departure. Ecumenical activities include meetings with the World Council of Churches, the World Lutheran Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Conference of European Churches, the Swiss bishops said.

U.N. Called Anti-Semitic

United Nations -- The United Nations has become "one of the foremost contemporary forums of international anti-Semitism," according to Israel. The Israeli complaint was made by Ambassador Yehuda Blum in a letter to U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Israeli officials said the letter was the result of accumulated incidents in various U.N. meetings in which Arab or East European diplomats used language Israel found offensive or anti-Semitic. The letter was sent in mid-January and had drawn no official response by February.

100,000 Join in March

Vatican City -- More than 100,000 people marched Jan. 29 in Lyon, France, in defense of the autonomy of private schools and the right of Catholic parents to educate their children according to their own value systems, Vatican Radio reported. The crowd demonstrated in support of private school authorities who have complained that a proposed government reform threatens the educational freedom of private schools. The government has proposed the creation of one school system which would assimilate private schools into the public education system.

Vatican Aid Denied

South Orange, N.J. -- The New York Times story on alleged Vatican aid to Nazis was made up of "assumptions and suggestions, unproven statements, poor reasoning and inaccurate language," according to an expert in Judeo-Christian studies. In a statement issued Feb. 1, Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher, director of the Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University in South Orange, said there was no Vatican involvement in efforts to help Nazi war criminals emigrate illegally and escape persecution after World War II.

Nation

Detention 'Unacceptable'

Washington -- Detaining asylum-seekers is "morally unacceptable" and contrary to the longstanding Immigration and Naturalization Service policy of paroling them into the community, Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Pittsburgh, chairman of the U.S. bishops' migration committee, said Feb. 7. Citing a hunger strike by more than 100 asylum-seekers in the Krome Detention Center in Miami, which ended Feb. 6, Bishop Bevilacqua said the incident "calls into question the very policy of detention." The asylum-seekers at Krome had been forced to go on the hunger strike, Bishop Bevilacqua said, "with obvious risks to their health and life, in order to call the attention of society to their suffering and their desire for freedom."

Governor Petitioned

Raleigh, N.C. -- Catholic and Protestant religious leaders in North Carolina have appealed to Gov. James B. Hunt to abolish the death penalty, saying that it "teaches revenge, not mercy; brutality, not kindness." In a statement signed Jan. 25, the church leaders said the death penalty "violates the Christian's reverence for human life.... The death penalty is a direct denial of the basic Christian doctrines of forgiveness of sin and the power of redemption." Their action came as North Carolina prepared to carry out its first execution in 23 years.

Vatican Explains Study

Seattle -- The Vatican-ordered study of Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle was made "precisely because we did not want to give uncritical acceptance to extremist viewpoints," said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, in a letter to the Seattle prelate. Archbishop Hunthausen made the Vatican letter public in his archdiocesan newspaper, The Progress, Jan. 26. His governance of the Seattle Archdiocese was the object of a week-long apostolic visitation to Seattle last November by Archbishop James A. Hickey of Washington.

Focus on Today's World



Bishops walk in procession in Johannesburg, South Africa, after a Mass at Christ the King Cathedral for Father Smangaliso Mkhathswa, secretary general of the Southern Africa Bishops Conference. The priest was arrested but not charged by the government in October and is awaiting trial. About 3,000 participated in the Mass, including 32 bishops. Sermons and prayers were offered in three languages calling for the release of Father Mkhathswa.



Former Polish Solidarity labor union leader Lech Walesa holds a photo taken at Notre Dame University's 1982 commencement at which he was awarded an honorary degree in absentia. The photo shows university president, Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, and other dignitaries applauding an empty chair draped with the Polish flag and Solidarity banner. Walesa, who was being held incommunicado by Polish authorities at the time, did not learn of the honor until an Indian television crew visited Poland and Father Gene Kozmierzak, pastor of St. Adalbert parish in South Bend, presented the picture.



Father Larry D. Lossing relaxes in his home in University City, Mo., with his sons David, left, and Michael, wife Eileen and daughter Laura. Father Lossing, one of 70 former Episcopal priests accepted in the Catholic faith as married priests, was ordained Feb. 11.

Provided by
NC News Service

the Saints *by Luke*

ST. GILBERT OF SEMPRINGHAM



GILBERT WAS BORN IN SEMPRINGHAM, ENGLAND, SON OF A NORMAN KNIGHT, AROUND 1085. HE BECAME A CLERK FOR BISHOP BLOET AND WAS ORDAINED BY THE BISHOP'S SUCCESSOR, ALEXANDER. GILBERT RETURNED TO SEMPRINGHAM AS LORD ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER IN 1152. IN THE SAME YEAR HE BEGAN SERVING AS ADVISOR TO A GROUP OF SEVEN YOUNG WOMEN LIVING IN ENCLOSURE WITH LAY SISTERS AND BROTHERS AND HE DECIDED THEY SHOULD BE INCORPORATED INTO AN ESTABLISHED RELIGIOUS ORDER. AFTER ESTABLISHING SEVERAL NEW FOUNDATIONS, GILBERT WITH THE APPROVAL OF POPE EUGENE III CONTINUED THE COMMUNITY AS MASTER-GENERAL. THEY BECAME KNOWN AS THE GILBERTINE ORDER, THE ONLY ENGLISH RELIGIOUS ORDER ORIGINATING IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD; IT EVENTUALLY HAD 26 MONASTERIES, WHICH CONTINUED UNTIL KING HENRY VIII SUPPRESSED MONASTERIES IN ENGLAND. GILBERT BECAME KNOWN FOR HIS AUSTERITIES AND CONCERN FOR THE POOR. HE WAS IMPRISONED IN 1165 ON A FALSE CHARGE OF AIDING THOMAS OF CANTERBURY DURING THOMAS' EXILE, BUT WAS LATER EXONERATED. HE WAS FACED WITH A REVOLT OF SOME OF HIS LAY BROTHERS WHEN HE WAS 90 BUT WAS SUSTAINED BY POPE ALEXANDER III. GILBERT, IN ADVANCED AGE, RESIGNED HIS OFFICE BECAUSE OF BLINDNESS AND DIED AT SEMPRINGHAM IN 1189. HE WAS CANONIZED IN 1202. HIS FEAST IS FEB. 16.

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COURIER-JOURNAL

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Vol. 95, No. 20 February 15, 1984

Courier-Journal (USPS 125-800)
Published weekly except twice after
July 4 and Christmas. By the Rochester
Catholic Press Association. Subscrip-
tion rates: Single copy 37¢; 1-year
subscriptions in U.S. \$13, Canada and
Foreign \$20. Offices: 114 South Union
St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.
(716) 454-7070. Second Class postage
paid at Rochester, N.Y. POST-
MASTER: Send address changes to
Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St.,
Rochester, N.Y. 14607.