

# COURIER-JOURNAL

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## Local priest witnesses destruction

# With Church assistance, Mexico begins recovery from massive earthquake

From NC News Service and local reports

In Ciudad Guzman, Mexico, people made homeless by the massive earthquakes which rocked their country prayed at a homemade statue of St. Peter Sept. 22 then ate a breakfast provided by the Catholic Church and the Mexican government.

The city's cathedral was in ruins after it collapsed during the first quake Sept. 19 killing 30 worshippers and injuring 360 at an early morning Mass. It was the second time a cathedral on that spot had been toppled by an earthquake. The first time was in 1906.

Father Paul J. Ryan, a member of the Diocese of Rochester's mission team in our sister diocese of Tabasco, Mexico, was in Mexico City at the time of the earthquake, trying to straighten out paperwork for his visa. Father Ryan, of St. Rita's parish, Webster, said he was waiting in line at 7 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 19, in the Mexican Immigration office when the ceiling began to crack.

He reports that the Immigration building began to collapse and that he escaped when the heaving of the structure threw open a locked door. He stayed in Mexico through Thursday, praying over the many dead and consoling their families, before returning to Rochester Friday evening.

Bishop Serafin Vasquez of Ciudad Guzman, who was six blocks away when the cathedral collapsed, said of the event: "This pain is too deep. I cannot explain it. Oh, God."

In Mexico City, where the death and damage was heaviest, health authorities were pressuring the government to begin burying dead. Many citizens were reported to fear that their deceased relatives and friends would be interred or cremated without a proper Catholic ceremony.

Official reports place the death toll in Mexico City at 2,000 and said it could go as high as 5,000. U.S. Ambassador John Gavin estimated the figure to be as high as 10,000. He said it could possibly 20,000 after much

of the rubble was cleared.

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City reported five Americans dead. The embassy estimated that there were 4,500 tourists and 138,000 U.S. citizens living in the Mexico City area at the time of the earthquake.

The second quake hit the city Sept. 20.

While Mexico began recovering from the tremors which destroyed large sections of Mexico City, relief efforts were underway in the United States from a variety of sources.

For instance, over the Sept. 21-22 weekend, the Diocese of Phoenix, Ariz., held special Mass collections to raise money to aid victims of the quake.

Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien of Phoenix expressed sympathy for the Mexican people. He especially sympathized with "those in our diocese who have relatives or friends in the affected area."

Bishop O'Brien said the proceeds of the collection would be turned over to Catholic Relief Services.

In the Denver Archdiocese, the Catholic Church was receiving supplies for the earthquake victims and planned to airlift them to Mexico.

Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio, Texas, sent a delegation to Mexico to assess the damage.

The southwestern United States has a large Hispanic population with historical and kinship ties to Mexico.

A spokeswoman for the Mexican Embassy in Washington, Pilar Franzoni, said that the Mexican government was sending inspectors to check the structural soundness of cathedrals in earthquake-stricken areas to ensure their safety as many of the homeless flock to the churches.

International relief was estimated to total \$2 billion. The International Development Bank was reported to have made \$800 million available in emergency loans to Mexico while the International Monetary Fund was said to be ready to extend \$400 million in emergency credit.



## Steppin' Out

Mia Johnson, 1, steps out to get a closer look at St. Bridget's choir during Saturday afternoon's performance of the benefit scholarship concert. The performance was sponsored by The Mother Cabrini Circle. For story and more pictures see Page 5.

## Papal condolences, Catholic aid sent to quake victims

By NC News Service

Pope John Paul II expressed his "profound sorrow" Sept. 20 for the victims of the severe earthquake which struck Mexico the previous day, while U.S. and Canadian Catholic agencies began dispatching aid to the country.

In Los Angeles, Archbishop Roger Mahony sent \$100,000 in relief aid to Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumada of Mexico City.

The New York-based Catholic Relief Services announced Sept. 20 it would provide \$50,000 in emergency relief and send a team to Mexico to determine what further assistance is needed.

In Toronto, Development and Peace, the Canadian Catholic overseas development organization, sent \$30,000 in emergency funds to Caritas Mexico, Mexico's Catholic relief agency. The aid followed an appeal from the Mexican bishops' conference, Development and Peace officials said.

The pope sent his telegram to Archbishop Sergio Obeso Rivera of Jalapa, Mexico, president of the Mexican bishops' conference. He also offered his prayers for the deceased and his condolences to their families and to all those affected by the earthquake, the most serious to strike Mexico in this century.

There are no clear figures on the number killed in the tremors which demolished scores

of buildings. Estimates range from 1,000 to 3,000.

"We mourn for the many hundreds who have died, and we extend our Christian love and concern to the thousands who have been injured and who have suffered the loss of their homes and property," Archbishop Mahony said in a telegram to Cardinal Ahumada.

Mayor Ramon Aguirre of Mexico City said an unofficial count showed that about 1,000 of the city's 18 million people were killed. News stories quoted rescue workers saying the death toll could be around 3,000.

Much of the damage occurred in the downtown and northern sections of the city.

The Mexican Embassy in Washington said Sept. 20 that cathedrals in the states of Jalisco, Michoacan and Guerrero had collapsed. Vatican Radio reported that in Ciudad Guzman, a collapsing cathedral killed 26 persons who were attending early morning Mass.

An embassy spokeswoman, Pilar Franzoni, said that in Mexico City 4,000 persons were injured and 1,000 were trapped in the rubble. She said 3,000 people were homeless and that food and housing was provided for them.

She said there had been no contamination of the water supply, electrical services would be returned to normal within a few days and that mobile food units had been dispersed

throughout the city.

She also said 250 buildings were destroyed, 50 more were expected to fall and another 1,000 were in dangerous condition. There was no information on the damaged cathedrals, Ms. Franzoni said.

In the state of Michoacan, the hardest-hit area, there were a reported 35 dead and 347 injured.

The quake struck at 9:18 a.m. EDT, registering 7.8 on the Richter scale, a gauge of released energy. The highest readings on record were 8.9 from quakes off the coast of Ecuador, in 1906, and off the coast of Japan, in 1933.

The U.S. Geological Survey said that the Mexican quake was of the same magnitude as the one which struck Chile March 3, killing at least 177 people.

It said the Mexican quake was centered about 250 miles southwest of Mexico City. The epicenter appeared to have been near the west coast beach resorts of Acapulco and Zihuantanejo.

The deadliest earthquake in modern times struck northeastern China in 1976. China said the quake killed 242,000 people. Other estimates said up to 750,000 died.

Donations for Mexican earthquake relief can be sent to Mexican Earthquake Fund, care of CRS, P.O. Box 2045, Church Street Station, New York, N.Y., 10008.

### Inside:

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The Diocesan Pastoral Center celebrates 10 years of service to the Diocese of Rochester — Page 3.

#### What we have seen

Local Church officials reflect on the first anniversary of the 1984 pastoral by 10 black U.S. bishops — Page 6.

#### Renewal retrospective

Our ongoing discussion of the effects of renewal on the lives of women religious continues on Pages 8 and 9.

#### Dreams come true

Dedicated parents brought to life the long-term renovation dreams of teachers at St. Lawrence and Mother of Sorrows schools — Page 11.