

# Family, friends celebrate homecoming of Father Jenco

By NC News Service

Family members met with Servite Father Lawrence Martin Jenco in West Germany Monday, July 28, two days after he was released from more than 18 months of captivity in Lebanon.

Back in the United States, friends and co-workers planned homecoming celebrations and Masses of thanksgiving.

Father Jenco, 51, director of Catholic Relief Services in Lebanon and one of five kidnapped Americans held there, was released unharmed July 26.

Islamic Holy War, a shadowy Shiite Moslem group, announced it was releasing Father Jenco as "a final goodwill gesture" and because of the priest's worsening health. Father Jenco has a long history of heart problems.

He was flown to a U.S. Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden, West Germany, where he met with family members from Joliet, Ill., who had campaigned for his release. Three sisters, three brothers, a nephew and three spouses met with Father Jenco.

"I'm not too sure it's true; it's a dream come true," Father Jenco told reporters in Wiesbaden. "It's great to be back, to be

loved again, to be back with the family.

"It's great to be back, but don't forget three brothers still there," Father Jenco said, referring to hostages still being held in Lebanon: Terry Anderson, Associated Press reporter; David Jacobsen, administrative director of American University in Beirut; and Thomas Sutherland, dean of agriculture at American University. A fourth kidnap victim, William Buckley, was reported killed last October, but his body was never found and U.S. officials said they have no evidence of his death.

Father Jenco said he spent six months in chains in solitary confinement and then shared a small room for a year with other American hostages.

"When Terry Anderson, Thomas Sutherland and David Jacobsen come back again, that will be my great day of joy," the priest told reporters.

Col. Robert Gilmore, deputy director of the hospital in Wiesbaden, said Father Jenco appeared tired but "in satisfactory condition" and would have to undergo several days of examination.

Mae Mihelich, Father Jenco's sister, said,

"We feel our efforts and our prayers have not been in vain."

In Joliet, Father Jenco's hometown, the bells of seven churches pealed forth the news of the priest's release.

On the lawn of the Mihelich house a sign that had marked the days of his captivity was changed to read: Fr. Martin Jenco. American Held Hostage in Lebanon, Released July 26, 564 days. Amen."

Members of Father Jenco's family took part in festivities at the July 26 Waterway Daze summer festival in Joliet, including a boat parade in which they rode in a boat named "Freedom" Yellow balloons — 564 of them — were released at the festival.

During Mass at the festival, Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet called the Jenco family a good example of perseverance and persistence. Citing that day's gospel reading, which said: "Ask and it shall be given," Bishop Imesch said: "These good people know what it means to knock until prayer is answered. I can't imagine how many days the Jenco family felt at the bottom ... but I can't say enough about their persistence and faith and belief in the Lord.

"As Christian people, we must never take freedom for granted. We must make sure that everyone has the same chance for freedom and equality," the bishop continued.

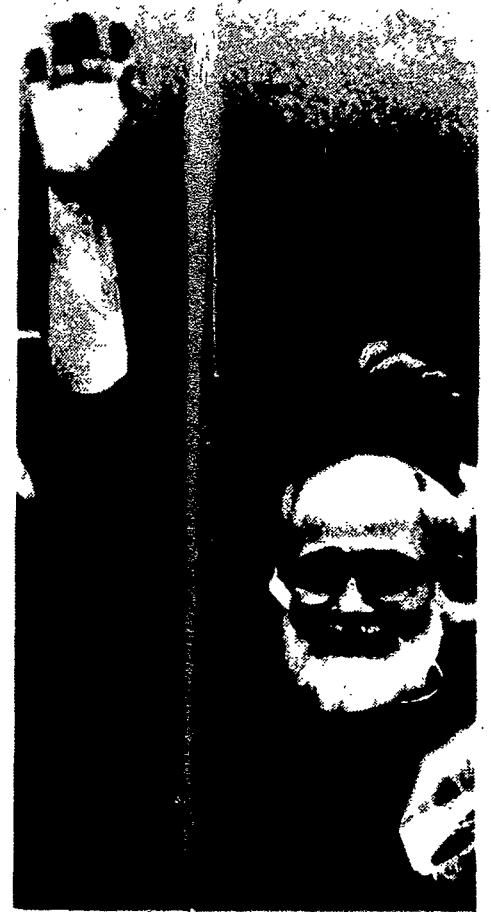
Preparations were underway in Joliet July 28 for a homecoming Mass and celebration for Father Jenco.

A Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated at Catholic Relief Services headquarters in New York by Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark, chairman of a subcommittee of the relief agency.

Father Jenco received a telegram of congratulations July 27 from Pope John Paul II. The Holy Father told Father Jenco that he "rejoices with you in your liberation and together with your family and friends ... Thanks to God that this has finally taken place."

Father Jenco also received a message from Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury, leader of the Church of England, who had sent an envoy to Beirut seeking the release of the hostages.

Asked whether the United States would make any concession to the captors of the other three hostages known to be alive,



NC Photo  
Father Lawrence Martin Jenco waves as he arrives at the U.S. Rhein-Main airbase in Frankfurt, West Germany.

Robert Oakley, head of the U.S. State Department's anti-terrorism section, said, "We are not prepared to make a bargain of this sort."

Family members said their pressure might have helped win Father Jenco's release. Joseph Jenco, the priest's brother, said the Reagan administration had been slow to act until pressured by members of Congress.

"They treated us like tourists when we first came to Washington," he said, adding that family members made about 30 trips to the capitol.



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Gates Police Officer Bob Curt dusts for fingerprints in the secretary's office at St. Theodore's School. Most of the damage occurred in or near the principal's office.

## St. Theodore's

Continued from Page 1

This latest incident will not further disrupt Masses, which have been celebrated in the school gym since fire virtually destroyed the roof in the rear of the church building a week earlier.

Meanwhile, five nearby parishes are pitching in to help with weddings scheduled at St. Theodore's. Two ceremonies last weekend were moved to Mother of Sorrows and Holy Rosary churches.

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"I think we have two weddings a weekend scheduled here for the next 10 years," Father Dunn said. He has yet to receive an estimate of the damage to either the church or school. Nor does he have an idea how long it will take to repair the church. "No one is wanting to hazard a guess at this point," he said.

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## Police kill man after chase from papal residence

Castel Gandolfo, Italy (NC) — During a hatchet-swinging confrontation, Italian police killed a man who had thrown what turned out to be a package of garbage over the wall of Pope John Paul II's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo early July 24, police officials said.

The man, identified as Roberto Porfiri, 45, was shot dead following a 13-mile car chase from the pope's residence toward Rome. Porfiri had tossed the package and shouted at police guards: "This present is for you and the pope" around 4 a.m.

The police said that when the pursuing patrol caught up with Porfiri, who was heading toward Rome, he leaped from his car swinging a hatchet at the officers, who then shot him.

Pope John Paul was at the residence, 15 miles from Rome, during the incident. Deputy Vatican press spokesman Monsignor Giulio Nicolini said the pope did not know about the event at the time.

The public prosecutor's office has ordered an investigation into the case.

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