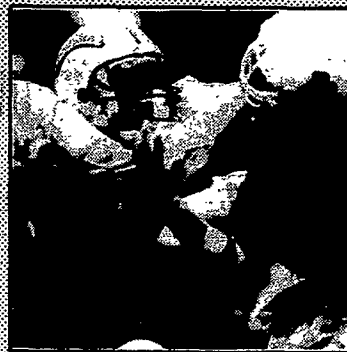




Contra contradiction

Former anti-Sandinista leader Edgar Chamorro dismissed as a CIA-created Hollywood fantasy the image of the Nicaraguan contras as freedom fighters. See page 3.



Weekend warriors

The beginning of the high school football season kicked off last weekend. For a look at grid games involving Catholic high schools within the diocese, see page 16.

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Pope points to success, stresses magisterium

By Agostino Bono
NC News Service

Pope John Paul II accentuated the positive in American Catholicism during his Sept. 10-19 visit to the United States, while calling for closer adherence to Church teachings currently under attack. He praised American Catholics for their generosity in establishing social welfare agencies for the poor and needy, and lauded the extensive Catholic school system, the integration of minority groups into the Church and the dedication of priests trying to come to grips with the concrete pastoral problems of their flock.

But he challenged Catholics to remain firm in the faith even when Church teachings go against the grain of contemporary cultural and social values.

"The Gospel, in its continuing encounter with culture, must always challenge the accomplishments and assumptions of the age," he said.

He asked Catholics to reject "the ineffectiveness of divorce, and its ready availability in modern society."

He told young people to follow Church teachings "that sex is a great gift of God that is reserved for marriage" even though their contemporaries will call them "backward" and "reactionary."

He told seminarians to embrace celibacy so that they can offer a deeper and more universal love to their parishioners when they become priests.

Freedom and responsibility

The trip was also a challenge to the entire American society to rediscover the religious roots of its political system, which guarantees individual freedom and human dignity. The pope often cited the spiritual and religious values enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

He told Americans to make a moral accounting of how they use their freedom.

Regarding U.S. Catholicism, the stress was on the positive. The pope struck the positive note even before touching down in Miami, his first stop, and often reiterated it.

Answering questions from journalists on the flight from Rome, the pope said the U.S. Church is a "very good" Church in which the "great silent majority" adhere to doctrine.

But dissent is a "serious problem," he said, and an important element of the trip

was to tell Catholics who believe they can violate Church teachings and still be good Catholics that they are mistaken.

"It is necessary to follow the teaching of our Lord expressed through the Church," he said.

A few hours later, at a meeting in St. Martha's Church in Miami with 600 representatives of the 57,000 U.S. priests, he said priests must follow the magisterium even when dealing with "sensitive issues."

He praised a "merciful and gentle and forgiving" pastoral style, but said that when "what is claimed to be a gesture of mercy goes contrary to the demands of God's word, it can never be truly compassionate or beneficial."

A day later, in Columbia, S.C., he praised the American tradition of freedom but called on Americans not to lose sight of freedom's "true meaning."

"We must account for the good that we fail to do and for the evil that we commit," he said at an ecumenical service that drew 60,000 to the University of South Carolina's Williams-Brice Stadium.

"America, you cannot insist on the right to choose without also insisting on the duty to choose well, the duty to choose in the truth."

He said "sins against love and against life are often presented as examples of 'progress' and emancipation," and asked: "Are they not but the age-old forms of selfishness dressed up in a new language and presented in a new cultural framework?"

Pastoral visit

Although the pope was making the trip as a pastoral visit — not in his role as head of state — President Reagan, accompanied by Mrs. Reagan, nevertheless flew to Miami to greet him.

The trip is the pope's second major U.S. visit since the beginning of his pontificate nine years ago, although he had touched down on U.S. soil briefly during flights to and from trips to other countries.

His earlier visit, in 1979, had taken him to the East and the Midwest. The itinerary for this trip spans 5,331 miles and includes nine dioceses in the South, Southwest and Far West.

By Thursday, Sept. 17, the pope had



Associated Press photo
Pope John Paul II waves as he leaves the residence of Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy on Friday, where he spent the first night in the United States on his 10-day tour.

completed stops in Miami; Columbia, S.C.; New Orleans; San Antonio, Texas; Phoenix, Ariz.; Los Angeles; and Monterey, Calif. He continues on this weekend with visits to San Francisco and Detroit, plus a northern jaunt to Fort Edmonds, Ontario, Canada.

Overall theme of the visit is "Unity in the Work of Service." The schedule called for the pope to deliver 45 speeches and homilies, and to listen to presentations by representatives of various groups.

Dissent exaggerated

As Pope John Paul moved out to meet American Catholics, he expressed an underlying Vatican concern over an apparent split between those strictly adhering to doctrine and those favoring more flexibility based on personal conscience.

The situation had caused some strained relations between American bishops and
Continued on Page 6

Local residents enveloped in excitement of papal presence

"A blessed moment" and "a magnificent experience" were among the ways Rochesterians described their encounters with Pope John Paul II during the first leg of his 10-day trip across the United States.

Gaynelle Wethers, principal of St. Monica's School, and Rosemary Coleman, a teacher at Corpus Christi School, were among what they guessed were 400-500 people who gathered Saturday, September 12, in a small auditorium at the New Orleans Superdome for the pope's address to the nation's 11 black bishops and black Catholic leaders. Officials estimated the crowd at closer to 1,500.

Later in the day, both Coleman and Wethers attended the pope's youth rally at the Superdome, which drew an estimated 60,000 people.

"There was a magnificent spirit in the air," Wethers said. "New Orleans is a city that does a lot of celebrating anyway ... You could feel the anticipation, the excitement in spite of the struggles (to get there). In fact, I think (the struggle) somehow added to the

anticipation."

When the pope entered the auditorium at the Superdome Saturday morning, Wethers reported, the audience of black Catholics stood and began to sing. Throughout his 20-minute speech, the crowd continued to applaud and cry out their approval.

Particularly moving for Wethers were the pontiff's references to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose non-violent response to racism the pope called "a monument of honor to the black community," his praise for the black community's willingness to reconcile with those who continue to oppress them, and his emphasis on the responsibility of the Church to continue to serve the black community through Catholic education.

"The speech he gave was the most dynamic speech I've heard him give," she said. "It was how he said the things he said that was most important, how strong he was in expressing himself ... Even if you disagree with him, which I do in some instances, being there made a significant difference. It was

very important for me to know that he really does have some understanding and concern for what we go through."

New Orleans was a particularly appropriate place for Wethers, who grew up black and Catholic in that city, to hear the pope's call for an end to racism in the Church. "Because my greatest experiences with racism and oppression in the Church took place there, to go back and be present with the pope, and to hear what he had to say in that place had great meaning for me," she said.

Father John Firpo's first glimpse of the pope the following day in San Antonio was equally moving. "It was a blessed moment to be in the man's presence," he reported.

Father Firpo, diocesan director of social ministry, and 11 other staff and board members from the local offices of social ministry were among nearly 5,000 people who gathered at San Antonio's Municipal Auditorium late Sunday afternoon to hear the pontiff address the annual convention of

Catholic Charities USA.

In his half-hour speech to the convention, the pope "reaffirmed the basic thing that Catholic Charities is all about — the God-given dignity of the human person," observed Gregory Zuroski, director of planning and development for diocesan social ministry. "The thrust of his talk very much stressed the importance of the Church serving the poor."

Because English is not a language with which he is comfortable, the pope read most of his speech in a very deliberate style, observers noted. Toward the end, however, he abandoned his text for a few spontaneous comments, closing with "Charity — never enough."

"He struck me as a very, very charismatic person," Zuroski said. "His presence demonstrated a terrific concentration in front of a group. He doesn't ignore the group or the people who spoke before him, but he seems to be concentrating on something intently ... It was very dramatic, very moving."