

Protests small, vocal during papal trip

NC News Service

From Miami to Detroit, Pope John Paul II's Sept. 10-19 U.S. trip prompted small but vocal groups to demonstrate both for and against the pope's positions.

Demonstrators also used the trip to target government — not papal — actions.

In several cases, the demonstrations were sparked by disagreements with the Church's statements on homosexuality and women, including its refusal to ordain them, and by such Jewish concerns as the Vatican's failure to recognize Israel.

But protests were also heard from Native Americans, who criticized early Christian missionaries' treatment of Indians, and from Protestant fundamentalists and others opposed to the pope's visit for religious reasons.

Hoping to cash in on media attention to the pope, anti-abortion activists in Detroit

and Columbia, S.C., staged protests at abortion clinics to coincide with papal events. The protests led to arrests in both cities.

Some of the largest demonstrations occurred in San Francisco, where some 2,000 activists Sept. 17 protested Catholic stands on homosexuality, the ban on women's ordination and the pope's June meeting with Austrian President Kurt Waldheim.

The demonstrators converged a block from Mission Dolores, where the pontiff met with AIDS victims, their families and friends. In addition to "Pope go home" slogans chanted by the demonstrators, some held banners repudiating the pontiff with such statements as "The Holy Father Is Neither."

The next day about 200 protesters chanted "Shame, shame" near St. Mary's Cathedral, where the pope met with lay people.

In Miami, first city on the papal itinerary, protesters challenging Church positions on women and homosexuality gathered outside that city's St. Mary's Cathedral.

The next day, John Paul's meeting with Jewish leaders drew about 25 Jewish demonstrators who criticized Vatican policies.

In New Orleans, 10 persons held banners backing separation of church and state, Vatican recognition of Israel, reproductive freedom for women, and human rights and dignity for lesbians and homosexuals in a demonstration Sept. 12 outside Archbishop Philip M. Hannan's residence, where the pope stayed.

In Los Angeles, fewer than 100 protesters turned out Sept. 15-16 near St. Vibiana's Cathedral rectory, where the pope spent the night.

Some displayed placards stating: "Listen to Women as Jesus Did," "Priests Die of AIDS," and "Welcome King of the Hypocrites." The group included members of a primarily Catholic group, Women for Change in the Church, which advocates women's ordination.

Sometimes the protests were motivated by religious differences. In Columbia, John Paul met with an ecumenical delegation. But as thousands cheered his visit there, groups of up to 100 fundamentalist protesters demonstrated at papal stops, distributed anti-papal pamphlets, and chanted "Pope go home."

A scuffle broke out along the papal motorcade route Sept. 15 in Los Angeles when a small group of papal well-wishers tore down signs displayed by a Taiwan-based



UPI/NC News
Outside San Francisco's Mission Dolores Basilica, 4,000 people expressed their feelings about the Church's teaching against homosexual behavior.

Christian group that called the pope "the tool of Satan."

Before John Paul's visit in Carmel, Calif., Sept. 17 to the Carmel Mission Basilica, site of the grave of Father Junipero Serra, Secret Service agents moved a group of Native Americans attempting to hold a prayer vigil.

AIDS victims not outcasts, pope says

By Agostino Bono

San Francisco (NC) — As feminist and homosexual groups protested Church teachings outside, Pope John Paul II told AIDS victims and others assembled in an historic San Francisco church that God's compassion compares with that of a mother.

"God loves you all, without distinction," the pope told elderly and sick people gathered Sept. 17 at Mission Dolores Basilica.

"He loves those of you who are sick, those who are suffering from AIDS," he said. "God's love is tender and merciful, patient and full of understanding."

The pope also shook hands and chatted briefly with victims of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and their relatives. Among the victims was 4-year-old Brendan

O'Rourke, who greeted the pontiff with a warm embrace.

Concern for AIDS victims has been a subtheme of the pope's visit. In a talk to Catholic health workers in Phoenix, Ariz., the pope asked them to provide medical aid and spiritual compassion to AIDS victims.

During a press conference aboard his flight to the United States, the pope said homosexuals, especially AIDS victims, "are not outcasts."

"The homosexuals, like all people who suffer are ... in the heart of the Church," he said.



UPI/NC News
Pope John Paul II hugs four-year-old AIDS patient Brendan O'Rourke during his visit to the basilica in San Francisco.

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