

Pope contrasts war, hope in Easter message to world

By Greg Erlandson
NC News

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II contrasted Easter's message of hope with violence in "ever-beloved and tormented Lebanon" and elsewhere during his traditional Easter Sunday speech from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica.

Easter's truth is proclaimed to "today's world which in so many ways seems to be rushing headlong toward self-destruction and death," the pope told thousands of people standing in the sun-drenched Vatican square.

The pope delivered his "urbi et orbi" — to the city and the world — speech March 26 following an outdoor Mass attended by more than 100,000 people. Buses bringing pilgrims from throughout Europe for the Mass clogged the main streets leading to the Vatican, and the crowd nearly filled the square in front of the basilica.

As God passed through Egypt and freed the Jews in the event commemorated at Passover, so, through the resurrection of Christ, God continues to pass through the "tragedies and triumphs of today's world," the pope said, speaking from the central window in the basilica's baroque facade.

God passes the "troubled and blood-stained horizon of various countries" where "men, though they are brothers, fight one another in a scene of destruction and hatred as is still happening in the ever-beloved and tormented Lebanon," the pope said.

He also passes where "there do not exist conditions worthy of a truly human life through lack of housing, promiscuity, vagrancy."

Likewise God passes "where selfishness withers the fruitfulness of marriage and the family breaks up, where the innocence of children is exploited and corrupted, where violence is done to their defenseless goodness, where the shameful commerce of vice is carried on and women are still its main victim," Pope John Paul added.

Following the speech, the pope read Easter greetings in 55 languages, including 17 Eastern European tongues, Catalan, Swahili and Hindi. In English the pope wished all a "blessed Easter in the joy of Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord and Savior of the world."

The Vatican said the Easter Sunday Mass and speech were broadcast in 47 countries, including Hungary, South Korea and Jordan.

The events on Easter Sunday capped a weekend of activities commemorating Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy



AP/Wide World Photos
An Israeli border policeman armed with an M-16 assault rifle watches a group of Christian pilgrims, including a woman carrying a cross, process along the Via Dolorosa during the traditional Way of the Cross service in Jerusalem on Good Friday.

Saturday, the pinnacle of the church's liturgical year.

On Holy Thursday, March 23, the pope traveled to the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Rome's cathedral church, to commemorate the Last Supper in a Mass concelebrated with 11 cardinals and nine archbishops. The ceremony included the traditional washing of the feet of 12 men just as Christ washed the feet of his apostles. This year the 12 whose feet were washed and kissed by the pope included seminarians from Nigeria, Zaire, Uganda and Vietnam studying in Rome.

In his homily the pope said that by washing the apostles' feet, Christ "reconfirmed" his new commandment, to "love one another as I have loved you."

At noon on Good Friday, March 24, at St. Peter's, Pope John Paul II heard the confessions of six people, including a religion teacher from West Germany, a housewife and her son.

Afterward, in a brief talk, the pope said his time in the confessional every Good Friday was "to remember in a symbolic way that among the priest's duties" is the administering of the sacrament of reconciliation.

Many Catholics came hoping to confess to the pope, but he said that it would take months to hear all of them, and "the pope has another mission to perform."

In the afternoon, he celebrated the passion ceremony in the basilica where he, along with Vatican cardinals and archbishops, venerated the cross and received Communion. That evening the pope traveled to the Colosseum, where he led the traditional celebration of the Stations of the Cross. Thousands attended the ceremony, and more viewed it via television broadcasts in 25 countries.

Meditations read at each of the 14 stations were written by the Polish poet and journalist Marek Swarnicki. Recalling the sufferings of the modern world in the light of Christ's crucifixion, one meditation said that today Jesus walked "among the im-

Experts see optimism, fear in Salvadoran vote

By Liz Schevtchuk
NC News

WASHINGTON — When death hovers over the ballot box, outcomes of elections in small countries like El Salvador often prompt reactions of fear, hope and concern far away.

Voting March 19, Salvadorans chose as president Alfredo Cristiani, candidate of the Republican Nationalist Alliance, or ARENA, a party linked to right-wing death squads.

Three journalists and at least 30 other people died in election-weekend killings in the country, which is about the size of Massachusetts and includes about 5 million people.

In the aftermath, U.S. sources found signs of both optimism and fear — optimism because the elections occurred at all and included participation from once-disenfranchised dissident leftist factions; and worries that ARENA's victory will not end the bloody civil war and economic disasters plaguing El Salvador, headed since 1984 by President Jose Napoleon Duarte.

Cristiani won more than 53 percent of the vote while the incumbent Christian Democrats, considered moderate politically, won about 37 percent. About 3 percent of the votes went to the leftist Democratic Convergence — some of whose members are from parties linked to the rebel Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, blamed for murdering mayors and for other terrorism.

Scheduled to take office June 1, Cristiani urged cooperation in promoting peace and in "of course, eliminating violence and



AP/Wide World Photos
Pope John Paul II kisses the foot of a priest during Holy Thursday services at St. John Lateran Basilica.

mense crowd of naked humanity led to the gas chambers, among the leprous outcasts and incurably ill."

At the Easter Vigil celebration Saturday night, March 25, in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope said that "the death of Christ became the death of sin" through his resurrection. The pope also greeted with "emotion and affection" 15 catechumens from Japan, South Korea, the United States, France, the Philippines, Iran, Egypt and Italy, whom he baptized and confirmed during the ceremony.

human rights violations."

A State Department official told National Catholic News Service that Cristiani initially "seems to be saying the right things," although "obviously words are never enough. Deeds are what count."

Nonetheless, added the official, who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis, Cristiani and his party "were elected by the democratic process. We have to really respect the Salvadoran voters to a certain extent."

Maryknoll Father Paul Newpower, spokesman on Latin America for his order, said that among church workers, "I think there's a fear the elections are just a throwback to the early 1980s, when there was an increase in human rights violations and death-squad killings and persecution of the church."

The voting occurred as Washington policy-makers prepared to discuss the Bush administration's foreign policy plans, including its options in El Salvador, whose ties with the United States for the last decade have been saturated with blood and money.

Among approximately 70,000 victims slain in El Salvador in nearly 10 years were several U.S. citizens, including two Maryknoll nuns killed with two other Catholic women missionaries in December 1980. Meanwhile, during the same decade, the U.S. government has poured some \$3.5 billion in aid into the country.

For fiscal 1990, the Bush administration wants to provide El Salvador with some \$386 million — \$287.5 million in economic aid, and \$98.6 million in military aid,

"We all share with you, dear catechumens, the greatness and joy of this moment," he said.

Earlier on Saturday the pope met with 380 Polish pilgrims at the Vatican. He told them the resurrection of Christ is "full of meaning, not only for individuals, but also entire societies."

"We Poles, and I believe not only we in the course of the world's history, have surely lived deeply the Easter mystery at the time in which it seemed our nation was buried," he told them.

according to the State Department.

How much money actually is provided depends on what happens in El Salvador, said government and church officials in Washington. "We've made perfectly clear that a good relationship with the United States depends on having a human rights policy that's effective and continuing in having a democratic form of government," the State Department official said.

Cristiani said that "to us the winner is the Salvadoran people. And what the people want is a solution to their problems. ... We intend to be a government for 5 million Salvadorans."

Despite the continued bloodshed and chaos in El Salvador, "something clearly has happened in the last few months," said Thomas E. Quigley, adviser on Latin American affairs in the international justice and peace office of the U.S. Catholic Conference. "The need for a negotiated settlement has been accepted by all parties — in principle," Quigley said. "There is less talk of military victory anymore."

American bishops, like their Salvadoran colleagues, support a negotiated settlement and do not favor outside military support to any contending force in Central America.

Expressing similar sentiments, a pending congressional resolution suggests that "it is clear that a military solution ... cannot be achieved," that "a unique opportunity exists" now for political progress and that the United States "should reassess current policy and vigorously pursue every possible avenue to secure a negotiated political settlement to the civil war in El Salvador."