

New York City rally aims to defuse racial tensions

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Mayor David Dinkins of New York, speaking at a May 22 "Unity Rally" he initiated at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine, called on his fellow New Yorkers to join him in "a permanent campaign to bring our city together."

New York Gov. Mario M. Cuomo and Cardinal John J. O'Connor of the Archdiocese of New York were among the political, religious, labor and community leaders pledging their support to the campaign.

The rally was held to counter a mood of tension that has built up as a result of several racial incidents, including the killing of young black men in Howard Beach and Bensonhurst, and a black boycott of a Korean market.

Those boycotting the market charge that a black woman shopping there was beaten. The Korean operators deny that the women was beaten, but say they did take action to prevent shoplifting.

"We are witnessing the children of the immigrants and the oppressed fighting each other as never before," Dinkins said. "The powerless are trying to prove their power by hurting those who are just as powerless. It must stop — and it must stop now."

Cardinal O'Connor said that as a representative of the 3 million Catholics in the city, he felt obliged to apologize for "any of my own failures" and pledged "to exert whatever leadership I can to help the mayor achieve his goals."

The preceding Sunday, Cardinal O'Connor had announced during his Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral that he was calling for a pledge against racism from all Catholics of the archdiocese, which includes the New York boroughs of Manhattan, Staten Island and the Bronx, plus seven neighboring counties.

He followed up with a letter to each pastor of the archdiocese asking that on Pentecost Sunday, June 3, they lead their congregations in reciting:

"I pledge to treat all men and women of every race and culture with the respect and dignity that is their right as persons made in the image and likeness of God."

The letter also asked that the prayers of the faithful that Sunday include the petition, "That the Spirit of God may root out of human hearts all forms of prejudice, racism and hate, and replace them with understanding, love and respect for people of all races, cultures and classes."

As a third action, Cardinal O'Connor asked that homilies on Pentecost develop the theme of the equality of all people. At the "Unity Rally," the Rev. Norman Quick, a black Pentecostal pastor who is president of the New York City Council of Churches, said the council was declaring June 4 a day of "solidarity against bigotry." He asked that New Yorkers mark the day by wearing blue ribbons and driving with their headlights on.

Cuomo, who spoke after Dinkins, joined him in urging frustrated New Yorkers to see that the source of much of their difficulty was not in each other but in federal policies that ignored such problems as drugs, illiteracy and lack of health care.



AP/Wide World Photos
Participants hold up candles at a unity rally inside St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York City Tuesday, May 22. Mayor David Dinkins summoned a cross-section of city leaders to mobilize the city's "silent majority" and help heal the city's racial wounds.

Among others speakers was Father Anthony J. Failla, pastor of St. Finbar Church in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. It was in his community that Yusuf K. Hawkins, a 16-year-old black, was killed last August 23, and where black protest marches led by the Rev. Al Sharpton have met intense hostility.

Father Failla said he was born in New York, and over the course of more than half a century had lived in five neighborhoods. "Until a few years ago, I felt the entire city was my neighborhood," he said. "Something has happened to us in the last 10 or 15 years."

He called on New Yorkers to regain faith in themselves, restore hope in their future and rebuild the fabric of community life with love.

Pastor indicted for illegal bingo

GARY, Ind. (CNS) — A pastor and former chancellor of the Diocese of Gary was among 12 people named May 16 in a 25-count federal grand jury indictment.

Monsignor John F. Morales, 56, pastor of Nativity of Our Savior Parish in Portage, Ind., was charged with creation of false union records, illegal gambling, obstruction of the Internal Revenue Service, two counts of filing a false tax return, perjury and preparation of a false document.

The charges arose from an illegal bingo operation sponsored by the parish and conducted between 1983 and 1986 at the United Steelworkers Local 1014 hall in Gary. Several current and former union officials were also indicted by the grand jury.

Bingo did not become legal in Indiana until March of this year for non-profit organizations.

Gary Bishop Norbert F. Gaughan in a May 17 statement said the diocese would defend Monsignor Morales.

Monsignor Morales was unavailable for comment.

The indictments resulted from an investigation by the Chicago Strike Force on Organized Crime and Racketeering after a four-year probe into the activities of the steelworkers' union and large-scale bingo games, which allegedly grossed \$100,000 a night.

The bingo games were shut down in March, 1986, when state and federal agents raided the union hall, seizing gambling equipment and an undisclosed amount of cash.

Monsignor Morales and the others indicted by the grand jury were scheduled to make initial court appearances May 30 in Hammond, Ind., where the case will be tried.

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