

Dalai Lama calls for unity in facing world's ills

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ITHACA — The Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, told several hundred people at a March 27 interfaith service that "the happiness of humanity" is the main goal of all major religions.

The 56-year old Dalai Lama, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, also told the people gathered in Ithaca's Immaculate Conception Church that religions should not concern themselves merely with spreading their own beliefs.

Rather, they should try "to see what each can offer to the common goals of humanity," he said, speaking through a translator.

"We are in an age where humanity is facing serious crises," he continued, "problems which call for unified and global solutions."

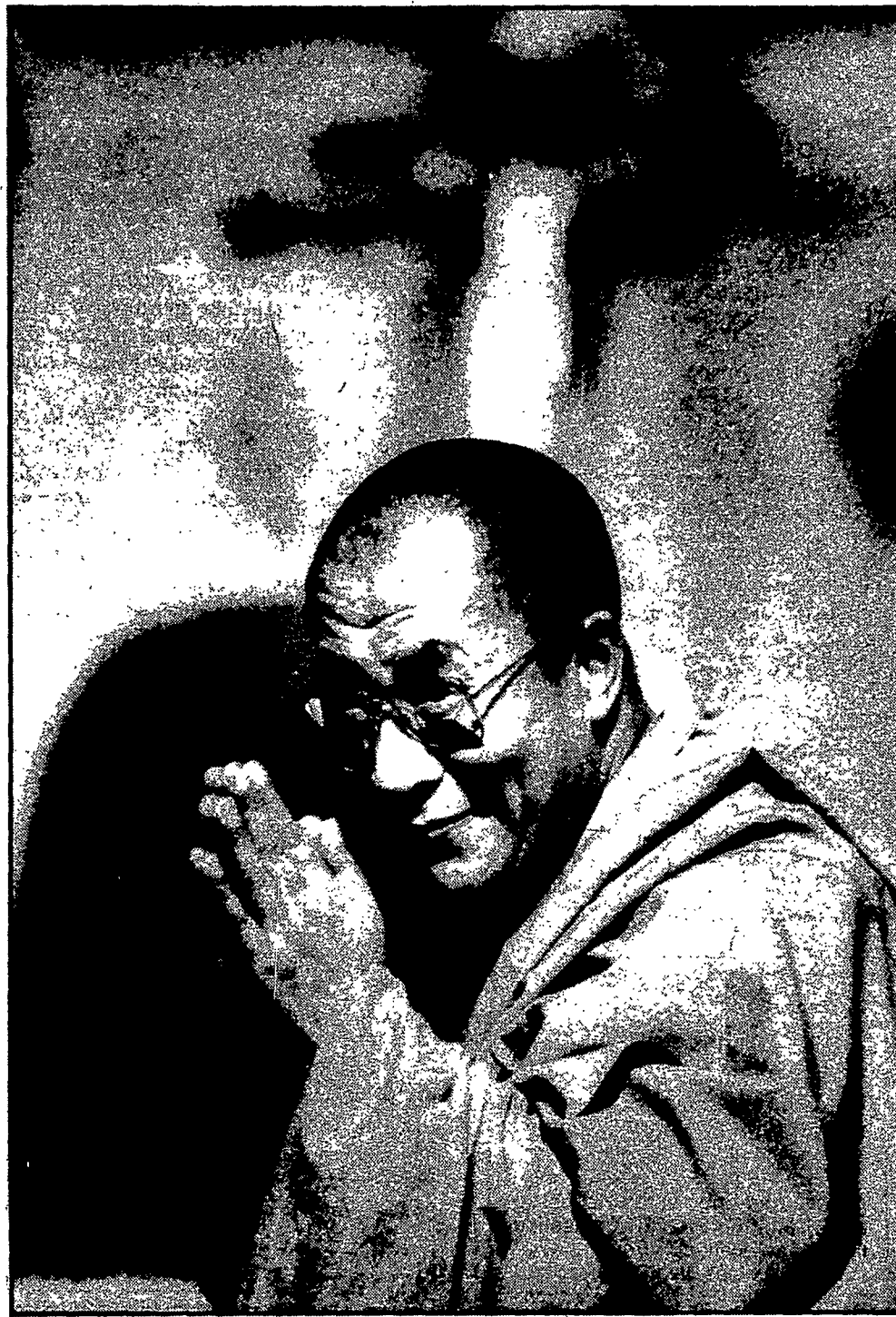
Religion, the Dalai Lama observed, can play a major role "in solving these worldwide problems."

The interfaith service was part of a three-day visit to Cornell University by the Dalai Lama. Also participating in the service were Bishop Matthew H. Clark; Bishop Ned Cole, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York; and representatives of Protestant, Jewish and Buddhist communities in the Ithaca area.

The Dalai Lama is in the United States for a trip that will take him to nine cities. The tour, which began March 18 and is scheduled to end April 18, is intended to promote the International Year of Tibet.

Tibet, a mountainous country of six million people located in Central Asia just north of India, has been occupied by the Chinese since 1950. Following an unsuccessful uprising in 1959, the current Dalai Lama — the 14th in a succession of monks who have led Tibetan Buddhism — and approximately 100,000 of his subjects were forced to flee their homeland. Until his exile, the Dalai Lama also served as temporal leader of his people.

The Dalai Lama's visit to Cornell included several talks about his faith and his still-occupied nation. The largest of these addresses, the 1991 Bartels World Affairs



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
The Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, greets the hundreds of people who attended an interfaith service at Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca.



As a prelude to the service, Tibetan-born flutist Nawang Khechog performs music intended to bring a deep sense of peace.

brought the Dalai Lama to earn the Nobel Prize. Living in India since 1959, the Dalai Lama long has sought a peaceful end to the occupation of his country. He has established a government in exile, and for the past 32 years has tried to maintain contact with his people and to counter Chinese efforts to wipe out Tibetan culture and religion.

According to visitors to Tibet and refugees fleeing the country, measures China has used to overcome Tibetan culture have included changing the country's name to Xizang, collectivizing private property, and making frequent arrests of Tibetan religious leaders.

During a press conference at Cornell March 26, the Dalai Lama said he would oppose armed intervention from other nations — similar to that taken by U.S. and allied forces in the Persian Gulf — to wrest Tibet from Chinese control. Moreover, he said he did not favor sanctions against China, but would welcome other nations' efforts to apply diplomatic pressure to the Chinese government.

In his Bartels' lecture, the Dalai Lama remarked, "World peace does not come from the sky or from the earth, but world peace must come from individuals."

All people seek happiness, he said.

"Every human being by nature wants happiness and joy," the Dalai Lama said. "We do not want suffering. The purpose of our life, the purpose of our existence, is happiness."

During the interfaith service, the Dalai Lama echoed those ideas, pointing to religion as one way to work together to find happiness.

The Dalai Lama said his experiences with people of other faiths have taught him that religions must develop more contact with each other to promote understanding and mutual respect.

Interfaith services like the one at Immaculate Conception "contribute to promoting mutual understanding," he remarked.

The service may indeed have such an

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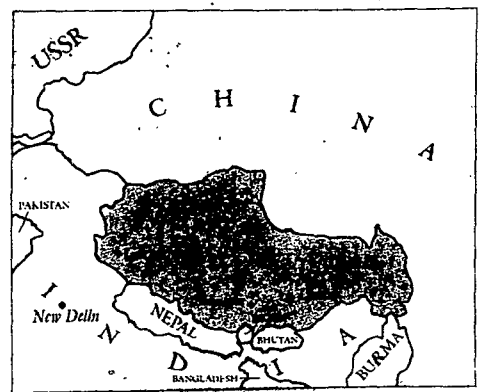


Participants in the March 27 service pray for peace in the world. The gathering also featured performances by an interfaith choir and the Peace Child Chorus of Ithaca.

Lecture on March 26, drew an estimated audience of 12,000.

The interfaith service was not on the Dalai Lama's original schedule, noted Father Bernard Carges, pastor of Immaculate Conception. But while Cornell and Tibetan officials were planning the visit, the Dalai Lama expressed the wish that an interfaith service be included, Father Carges said. Cornell University's director of community affairs, Jeanette Shady, an Immaculate Conception parishioner, suggested her church as the site for the service.

Father Carges said he was pleased to become the host for the service. "We



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thought it would be an honor to host a person I would consider a spiritual person and a promoter of peace and good will," the priest explained.

Deacon James Hankey, the parish's business manager, worked with an area clergy team to prepare for the hour-long service. During the service, representatives of several faith traditions offered prayers for peace in the world — especially for such troubled spots as South Africa and Northern Ireland. The service also featured performances by an interfaith choir and the Peace Child Chorus of Ithaca.

His great concern for peace is what

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