

Pope focuses on Mary during Portugal visit

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

FATIMA, Portugal (CNS) — The pope's early-May visit to Portugal turned into a four-day salute to Mary and showed the continuing strength of Marian devotion among Catholics.

Pope John Paul II thanked Mary for freeing Eastern Europeans from communist rule, protecting the church against decades of communist repression and saving his life in an assassination attempt 10 years ago.

He entrusted Mary with the tasks of helping the rebirth of a Christian Europe and

orienting contemporary generations lost to religion toward God.

Europe must find its Christian roots, otherwise it could fall to a new "theoretical and practical atheism which appears to want to build a new materialistic society," the pope told the Portuguese bishops May 13.

This form of atheism praises freedom but "tends to destroy the roots of human and Christian morals," he added later in the day during a ceremony entrusting church concerns to Mary's care.

The pope's two public events at Fatima,

site of one of Catholicism's most popular Marian shrines, drew more than 1 million people, while attendance at the other events was measured in the tens of thousands.

Also during the May 10-13 trip, the pope praised 500 years of Portuguese missionary history, calling the country the "pulpit of the Gospel" because its seaborne exploration and colonizing expeditions, starting in the 15th century, brought Christianity to Brazil and many parts of Africa and Asia.

The papal trip included stops in Madeira and the Azores, Atlantic islands that were jumping off places for Portuguese explorations of the New World.

Almost 94 percent of Portugal's 10.5 million people profess Catholicism, ac-

ording to the latest Vatican figures.

But the pope complained that many are marginal to the church.

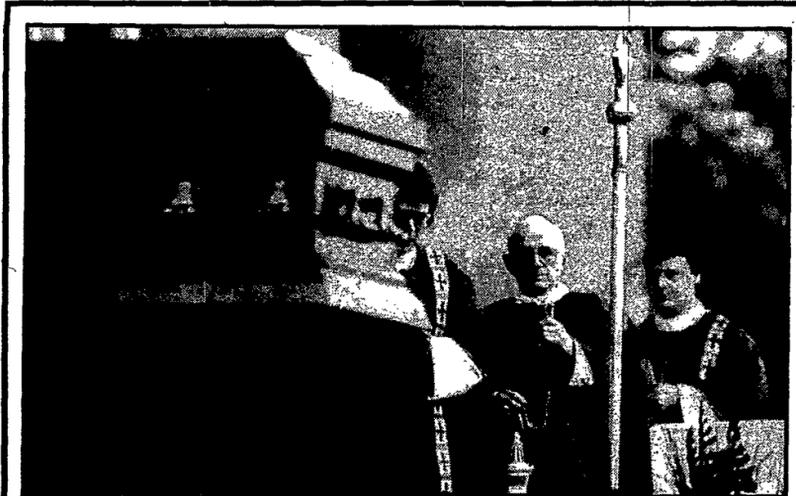
The task now is to re-evangelize "this multitude of baptized people who live far away from religious practice," he told the Portuguese bishops.

Otherwise, the Portuguese will become "vulnerable to secularism and sects," he added.

The main papal events occurred May 12-13 at Fatima, the site of six Marian apparitions to three shepherd children in 1917. The first apparition occurred on May 13, and the anniversary is a major pilgrimage date at Fatima.

During a May 12 outdoor evening prayer service, the pope prayed before a piece of

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AP/Wide World Photos

FINAL BLESSING — Cardinal Opilio Rossi (center) blesses the remains of former Hungarian Primate Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty. The remains were to be reburied in the cathedral at Esztergom, Hungary, May 4 in accord with Cardinal Mindszenty's wish to be buried in his homeland if it were freed from communist rule. The cardinal died in Vienna in 1975, following nearly 20 years of exile from Soviet rule.

Vatican arranges consultation concerning pastoral on women

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican Secretariat of State has organized a two-day international consultation in late May on the proposed U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on women's concerns, said Vatican officials.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the meeting would be held May 28-29.

Bishops from about a dozen countries have been invited to join U.S. bishops and heads of Vatican offices for the consultation, a Vatican official said.

The official said the Vatican felt an international consultation was important to enrich the document and because of the sensitivity of the topic.

Rather than have a single national bishops' conference act alone on such an important topic, the Vatican would prefer that there be wider consultation, he said.

Last September, in announcing that the U.S. bishops would delay a vote on the pastoral, conference president Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk of Cincinnati said that the Vatican is aware that American bishops' documents receive widespread publicity.

The only participants Navarro-Valls named were Archbishop Pilarczyk and Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, conference vice president.

Father George R. Norton, spokesman for the Rochester diocese, said Bishop Matthew H. Clark will attend the two-day consultation. Bishop Clark is chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on Women in Society and in the Church and a member of the committee writing the pastoral on women's concerns.

Navarro-Valls said that as far as he knows, this is only the second time the Vatican has hosted an international consultation on a pastoral letter being written by a single bishops' conference.

The first consultation was also on a U.S. bishops' project — the 1983 pastoral on war and peace.

Participation at that meeting included Curia officials, U.S. bishops and representatives of European bishops. The consultation on the women's pastoral is expected to be broader, reaching outside North America and Europe.

The project of a U.S. pastoral on women's concerns began in 1983. The first two drafts of the letter have focused on the dignity and equality of women, stressing the sinfulness of sexism and all forms of discrimination against women.

The bishops had planned to vote on the letter in November, 1990, but the vote was postponed, partly because of the Vatican suggestion that the consultation take place.

Archbishop Pilarczyk said last September that the Vatican did not order a delay on the vote.

"The Holy See — while leaving a decision on the matter to our own conference — has suggested that consultation with bishops' conferences of other countries on this pastoral letter would be appropriate because of the international significance both of our conference and of the topics we are discussing," the archbishop said in announcing the delay.

Archbishop Pilarczyk said postponing adoption of the letter also would improve the consultation process within the United States.

Bishop Joseph L. Inesch of Joliet, Ill., chairman of the committee writing the pastoral, said last December that the letter "may be on a life support system, but it is alive and well. The plug has not been pulled."

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