

Priest-president calls 'love' key to democracy

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Love, not military intervention, will help return Haiti to democracy, the nation's deposed president said at a press conference Oct. 4.

Father John-Bertrand Aristide, overthrown in a Sept. 30 coup by military leaders, repeatedly stressed that diplomatic negotiations and economic sanctions are the only steps he is currently considering to regain democratic control in Haiti.



AP/Wide World Photos
Jean-Bertrand Aristide, deposed president of Haiti, addresses the United Nations Security Council on Oct. 2. Aristide asked the Security Council for its support against the army officers who toppled his government and are out to murder democracy in Haiti.

A team representing the Organization of American States was due to meet with the leaders of the coup later that day in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Since leaders of the rebellion allowed him to leave the country Oct. 1, Father Aristide has sought assistance and support from the U.N. Security Council, the OAS and President Bush.

"We are sure democracy will live in Haiti," he said. He spoke mostly in French through a translator, but occasionally answered questions in English or Spanish.

Father Aristide clearly was upset by the increasing death toll in his country in the wake of the army's takeover and declined to discuss the potential use of force to oust the coup leaders. He emphasized diplomatic intervention aimed at forcing Brig. Gen. Raoul Cedras and his officers out of the country and eventually to trial.

"A strategy of withdrawal will save lives," he said.

The people of Haiti demonstrated "political maturity" by returning to their homes after soldiers began shooting protesters who took to the streets upon first word of the coup. Unlike citizens of the Soviet Union, who staged massive protests when a coup was attempted in August, Haitians have kept to their homes — apparently because of a well-grounded fear of attack by the army.

"What is important is the victory of human life," said the 38-year-old Catholic priest.

Father Aristide focused his attention on the military officers in charge, repeating his metaphor that his government and the army had "married" when he took office



AP/Wide World Photos
Jean Robert, 15, and another boy, age 18, lie in a Port-Au-Prince hospital Oct. 3, recovering from gunshot wounds they received after being shot by soldiers in the street earlier this week. Robert was outside of an orphanage run by former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide when he was shot as Aristide was ousted from power by rebel soldiers Sept. 30.

in February as the nation's first democratically elected president.

"We had seven months of living with the army in love ... dialogue and respect," Father Aristide said. Then a "crisis of power," a form of "madness" took over Cedras.

"If there were not a criminal at the head of the army there would not be so many

corpses," he said.

In returning democratic rule, making peace again with the military and restoring human rights, Father Aristide said, the key will be in simple love for mankind.

"Love may assist us to understand each other. Love may assist us to respect each other. And love is responsible for human rights."

Government dismisses charges against anti-nuclear protesters

BATH, Maine (CNS) — Charges of criminal trespass and criminal mischief were dismissed Sept. 30 against Catholic peace activist Philip Berrigan and four others arrested at an anti-nuclear protest on Easter Sunday.

The five had been arrested on March 31 after boarding the USS Gettysburg at Bath Iron Works — where the cruiser was undergoing construction — and hammering on vertical missile launchers. The group, calling itself the Aegis Plowshares, also spilled blood on the missile cruiser.

In an Oct. 1 press release, the Plowshares said the government's dismissal of charges was unexpected and that the five had been preparing for a jury trial beginning that day. It was only the second time

that charges were dismissed in more than 30 Plowshares actions, according to the release.

In addition to Berrigan, a former Jesuit priest from Baltimore, the defendants were Thomas Lewis and Barry Roth of Worcester, Mass.; Daniel Sicken of Brattleboro, Vt.; and Kathleen Boylan of Wyandach, N.Y.

The charges against the Plowshares carried maximum sentences of up to 18 months in jail and a \$1,500 fine for each defendant. The government gave no reason for dismissing the charges.

The Plowshares activists take their name from a passage in Isaiah: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares."



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