

Agency offers plan to assist L.A. riot victims

By **Tod Tamberg**
Catholic News Service

LOS ANGELES — With the fire-ravaged ruins of South Central Los Angeles still smoldering, archdiocesan Catholic Charities pledged to direct "our efforts, our revenues and staff" toward the victims of the violence.

Monsignor R. David Cousineau, executive director of Catholic Charities, outlined a plan expected to cost more than \$1 million to meet both the immediate and long-term physical and psychological needs of victims.

The plan includes food and transportation for frail, homebound elderly people, limited financial help for those left jobless by the riots, free transportation to grocery stores and clinics, crisis counseling services, food collection and distribution, and community forums on family values and community pride.

In a May 1 interview with *The Tidings*, Los Angeles archdiocesan news-

paper, Monsignor Cousineau said the time had passed for addressing the city's problems with words alone.

"Let's take our collars off, let's take our veils off, let's take our titles off and say what we are going to do," he said. "We need honest-to-God deep dialogue on the issues of pain in our community, not so much about the issues of what's beautiful in the future. Where is the pain and what can we do about it?"

Monsignor Cousineau said concrete steps — not more conferences — must be taken to ensure that fair pricing practices, equitable food distribution and better access to health care are available to people in areas affected by the riots.

The riot's ferocity "shows how fragile the crust of our community really is," he said.

Describing the Catholic Charities assistance plan, Monsignor Cousineau said a matter "of particular concern" is aid to the frail homebound elderly

"with their in-home needs for food and transportation." Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles said May 4 that more than 500 such people already had been identified.

Monsignor Cousineau also said Catholic Charities Psychologically Services Office would immediately begin providing "crisis intervention services for local schoolchildren and other community members suffering severe trauma as a direct result of this major disaster over the last three days in Los Angeles."

He put out a call "for community help in locating qualified mental health professionals ... who are willing to donate their time" to the counseling effort.

Looted and burned grocery stores in several areas of South Central Los Angeles have left many people with no place to get food, he said. In collaboration with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Red Cross, Catholic Charities community centers will provide "bulk food supplies to established volunteer-operated distribution programs" to help ease the food shortage, he added.

Programs focusing on "the promotion of family values, family preservation, independent living for the elderly and nurturing the development of community pride and good citizenship among youth" will be conducted through the agency's existing community sites, he said.

Bishop

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The bishop drove with his secretary over a dangerous road to Split in Croatia, and was able to reach Italy by boat. He said he planned to return to western Herzegovina May 16, but was uncertain when he would be able to re-enter Mostar.

Bishop Zanich said that he was once optimistic about independence for Bosnia-Herzegovina and the ability of its ethnic groups to live in peace.

"Now, with all these people killed, I don't know when that will happen," he said. The population of Mostar is about one-third Croatian, one-third Muslim

and one-third Serbian.

The bishop said he thought many lives were lost in the republic because Western European countries did not intervene decisively against the forces of Serbian militias and the federal army.

A similar complaint was lodged by Cardinal Franjo Kuharic of Zagreb, president of the Yugoslavian bishops' conference. He said the European community had failed to adequately distinguish between the "pitiless aggressor" and the victims in the fighting over the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Among the victims, he said, were the hundreds of thousands of residents in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who have had to flee their homes under attack by Serbian and Yugoslavian army forces.

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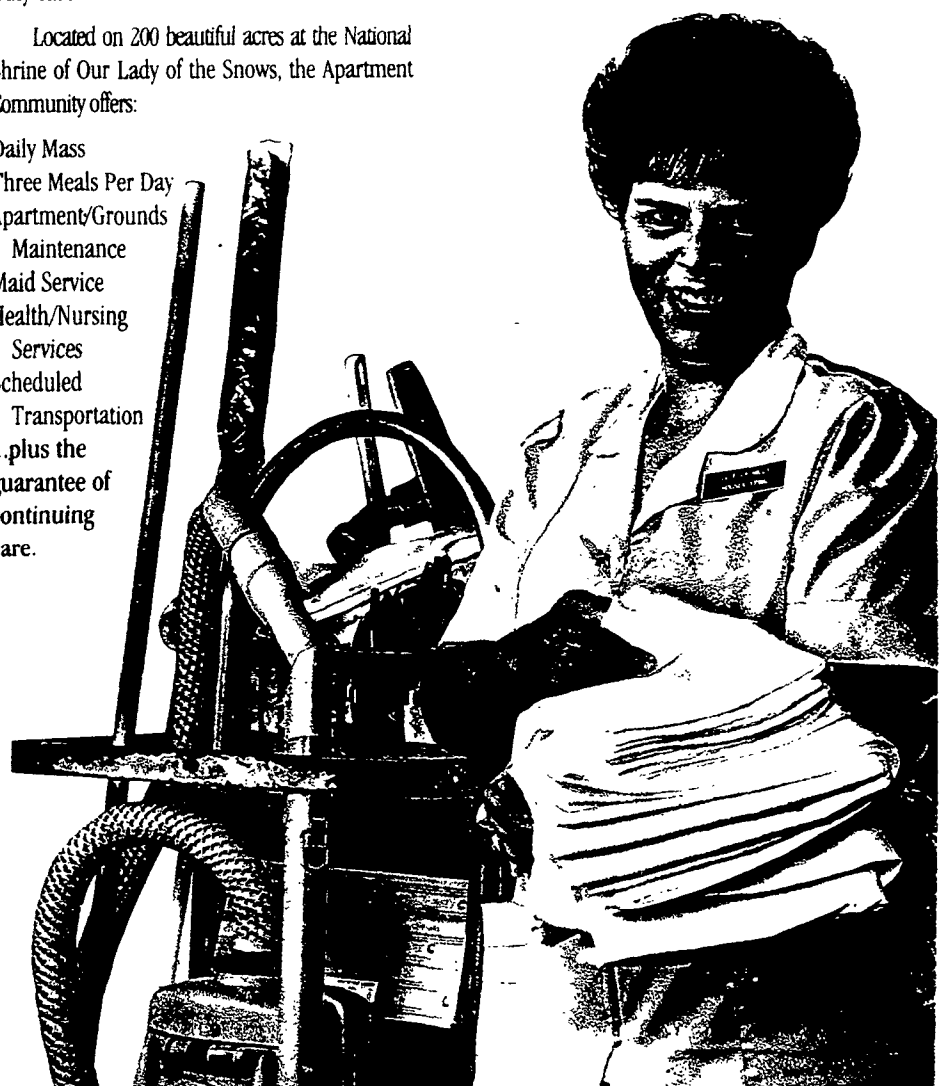
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