

Philippines seeks aid for victims of mud slides

MANILLA, Philippines (CNS) — Church and government officials are raising new funds for victims of the Mt. Pinatubo volcano — including an estimated 1 million people caught in the path of mud flows from the mountain.

A local radio station and Archbishop Alberto Piamonte of Jaro are soliciting funds from residents of Iloilo province. The aid will go to assist people displaced by rivers of mud that were triggered by monsoon rains.

"I understand it is very difficult (to ask our people's help) because we ourselves have been hit by calamities," the archbishop told UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand.

Although Iloilo is still recuperating from a seven-month drought, Archbishop Piamonte said he is optimistic that the 700,000 Ilongos will come to the aid of other provinces suffering even greater disasters.

The archbishop has directed parishes to campaign for Pinatubo victims and has asked that aid be sent directly to him.

"I guarantee there will be no more

corruption this time, because your money will be given through the bishop," he said.

Last year public officials were accused of pocketing funds solicited for Pinatubo victims.

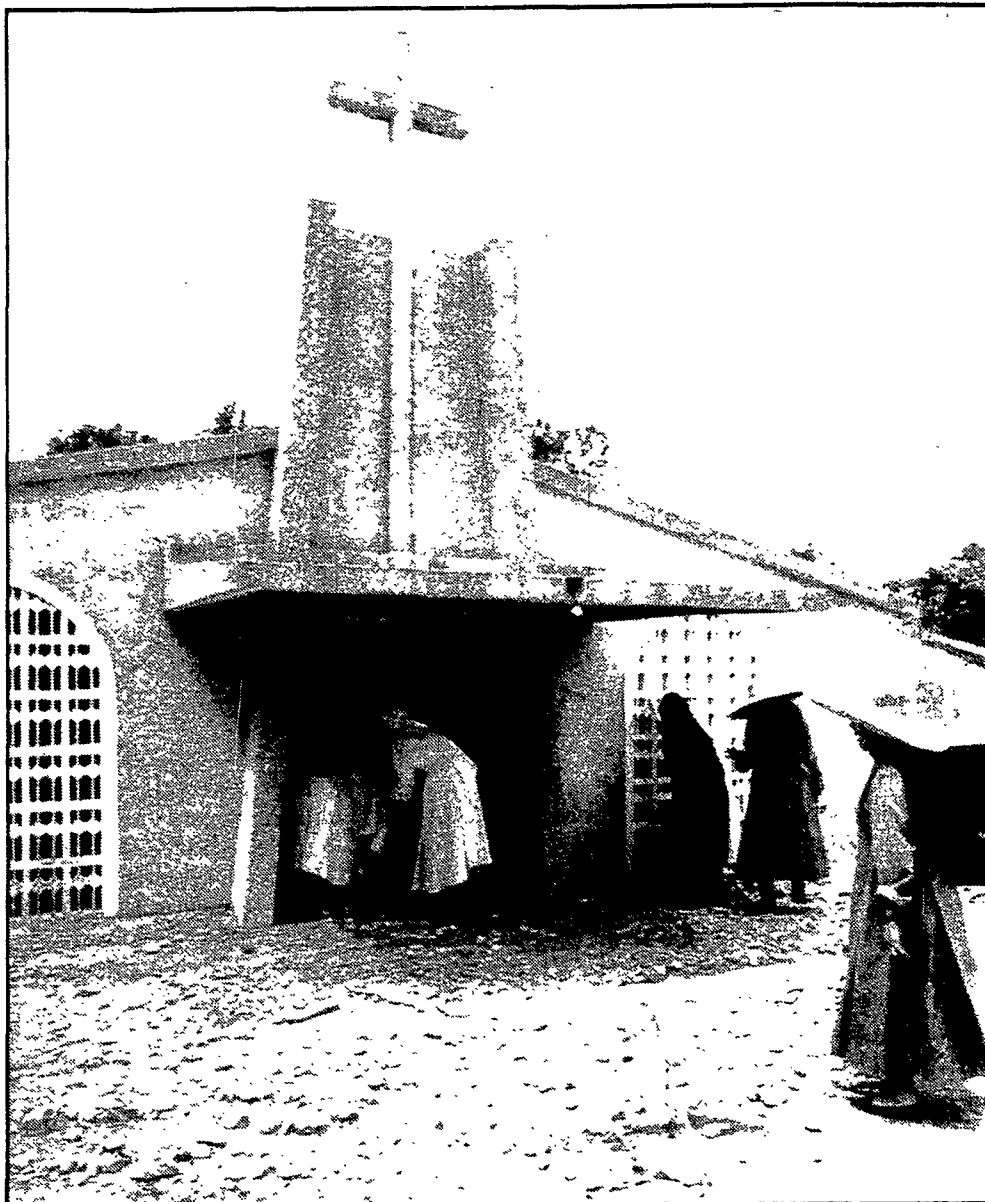
Meanwhile, President Fidel Ramos has asked Filipinos abroad to contribute to the aid program.

The president also asked foreign creditors for debt relief so that interest payments on the country's \$30 billion debt could be used instead for relief, relocation and rehabilitation of those made homeless by the mud flows.

Mud and flooding from four major rivers near Mt. Pinatubo are destroying villages in the provinces of Zambales, Tarlac and Pampanga in central Luzon.

On Sept. 8 the government ordered the evacuation of seven towns in the three provinces it believed could not be saved from the flow of water, lava, ash and other debris.

The volcanic materials were ejected during an eruption that killed more than 800 people last year. Volcanologists believe a second eruption is in progress.



AP/Wide World Photos

Roman Catholic nuns inspect their church in Bamban, the Philippines, Sept. 22. The edifice was buried by volcanic debris from Mt. Pinatubo the previous day. Continuous rains — brought by tropical storm Ted — saturated slopes near the volcano, loosening debris and creating mud slides that buried low-lying villages in their path. Thousands of residents are now housed in refugee centers.

Notre Dame professor to speak

ROCHESTER — The Rochester Life League, which comprises a number of area Catholic and Protestant churches, is sponsoring a lecture by Charles E. Rice of the University of Notre Dame Law School on Wednesday, Oct. 7, at the Rochester Convention Center, 123 E. Main St.

Entitled "Life in Peril," the free lecture is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m.

Rice will talk about the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*, the implication of the

Freedom of Choice Act, and the battle over abortion.

A panel of Rochester-area professionals will also respond to questions. Moderated by Judge John Manning Regan, the panel will consist of Michael DiPrima, president of the St. Thomas More Lawyer's Guild; Dorothy Hayes, a member of the Pro-Life Network; David Long, executive director of Project Life; and Dr. William Morehouse, a pro-life physician.

The program is open to the public.



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