

Pope: Learn from the past to solve today's problems

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Commemorating the 500th anniversary of Catholicism in the Americas means learning from the past to solve today's problems, said Pope John Paul II during an October trip to the Dominican Republic.

The pope grappled with the controversies of Spanish colonization and evangelization, but urged Latin American church and political leaders to build a better future rather than dwell on the dark side of history.

"The past, with its lights and shadows, illustrates and illuminates the reality of the present. But it is the future of this continent that has to be the object of decided and generous effort," he told the diplomatic corps stationed in the Dominican Republic Oct. 11.

The pope urged the diplomats to face "urgent socio-economic challenges" and said that Catholicism can be the necessary glue to bind Latin America because it is professed by about 90 percent of the population.

Catholicism is "a component which — by its very nature — is found on a different and more profound plane than mere socio-political unity," he said.

The papal trip began Oct. 9 and was scheduled to end Oct. 14. It was the pope's 56th trip outside Italy and his first since surgery three months earlier to remove his gallbladder and a large non-cancerous intestinal tumor.

Vatican officials organized a lighter-than-usual schedule for the 72-year-old pope, planning only one event outside the capital of Santo Domingo. But halfway into the trip, the pope decided to add several more events, including a Mass with Latin American sem-

inarians and a visit to a children's hospital.

On the papal flight to Santo Domingo, the pope held a 30-minute news conference, joked about his health and walked around to individually greet each of the 50 journalists. He asked them to judge whether he had recovered.

It was the pope's third visit to the Dominican Republic — an island where Columbus stopped during his 1492 voyage. The pope made the trip to commemorate the 500th anniversary and to open the Oct. 12-28 Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate.

Santo Domingo was chosen as the site of the meeting because it was the first diocese in the Americas.

The meeting's purpose is to map plans for a new evangelization in Latin America. The region has 395 million Catholics, about 43 percent of the world's total. But the faith is seen as superficial among many people, especially indigenous populations.

The pope began outlining his ideas for a new evangelization at an Oct. 10 Mass for priests and religious. He told them to avoid apostolic activities not in accord with the hierarchy.

"Do not be deluded by the idea that everything is resolved by denouncing evils which hinder or impede social development or by the noble will to share the faith of the disinherited," he added.

At an Oct. 11 outdoor Mass to commemorate the anniversary, the pope said evangelization should penetrate every aspect of Latin American life, ranging from personal morality to social problems. He said attention should be paid to abuses against Indians and efforts must be made to more rapidly overcome the region's massive poverty.



AP/Wide World Photos
LOST BOYS — Toyla Korolev, 11, of Yaroslavl, Russia, sits by himself on the playground recently as other boys play in the background at the Moscow Reception-Distribution Center for Children in Moscow. He was brought to the school last August after he was picked up by police in a Moscow railway station.

The Latin American bishops were asked to find new ways of meeting the challenges of today.

At the meeting with diplomats, the pope asked for greater political and economic integration of Latin America. He criticized the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few and massive spending on weapons as hindrances to improving the economic situation.

Regarding the 500th anniversary, the pope set the tone for celebrations in his Oct. 9 arrival speech.

The anniversary should be celebrated "with neither triumphalism nor false modesty" but "with the humility of truth," he said.

During his in-flight news conference the pope called the evangelization of

the Americas "one of the greatest events in history" and said that historically evangelization "started together with the discovery of America."

The pope acknowledged that abuses were committed during the colonial era and called them "sins" that were criticized by church people at the time.

The pope also tackled the controversies at the Oct. 11 outdoor Mass. He praised Columbus as someone who wanted to spread Catholicism to the lands he explored.

The Mass was held at the base of the controversial cross-shaped Columbus lighthouse in Santo Domingo, newly built as a museum and resting place for the reputed bones of Columbus. Columbus is criticized by many as a symbol of the abuses of colonialism.

Cartoon on singer's ridicule of pope draws cardinal's ire

CHICAGO (CNS) — Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin asked a Chicago daily newspaper to apologize for an editorial cartoon that links singer Sinead O'Connor's recent ridicule of the pope to sex abuse cases involving some Chicago archdiocesan priests.

But the paper, the *Chicago Tribune*, refused, saying the issue remained a subject of "enormous concern and legitimate journalistic comment," including satire by cartoonists.

The Oct. 9 cartoon, by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Jeff MacNelly, showed a group of priests watching as O'Connor tore up a photo of Pope John Paul II on NBC's "Saturday Night Live." The show was broadcast Oct. 3.

In the cartoon, one of the priests says, "Shame! Tearing up a photo of the Holy Father."

"Poor pathetic little bald girl," another priest in the cartoon says. "Probably abused as a small child by some trusted authority figure," says a third. A fourth priest in the cartoon wonders to himself "what she's doing Friday night."

Cardinal Bernardin demanded an apology in an Oct. 9 letter to the editorial page editor, N. Don Wycliffe. He said he was "saddened and offended" by the cartoon, which he said "by innuendo insults every good priest serving in the Archdiocese of Chicago."

In an editorial published Oct. 11, the *Tribune* said, "We regret if any of the good priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago felt unfairly treated," but added the cartoon "did not indict all the priests in the cartoon itself, let alone insult every good priest in the archdiocese."

Cardinal Bernardin, who in September unveiled strict guidelines for penalizing priests charged with sexual misconduct, said in his letter, "Admittedly, a few priests have engaged in behavior that has caused anguish for victims, their families and their communities, as well as for the priesthood itself. I share that anguish."

But the cartoon, he added, "implies that priests are either abusers or totally insensitive to this moral evil."

O'Connor, an Irish Catholic, has said in the past she was a victim of child abuse and that Ireland's religious climate was somehow partly to blame for it. After days without comment, she said the Oct. 3 "Saturday Night Live" incident was a protest to what she perceives as religious oppression in heavily Catholic Ireland.

Tom O'Connell, executive director of the Chicago chapter of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights added his protest of the cartoon.

"Catholics, Catholic clergy and Catholic values have become the whipping post for every bigot in America," O'Connell said in an Oct. 9 statement.

Actor Joe Pesci, hosting the Oct. 10 "Saturday Night Live," held up a patched-up picture of Pope John Paul and said, "Sinead O'Connor tore up a picture of the pope and I thought that was wrong." The comment brought applause from the audience.

"But I'll tell you one thing. She was very lucky it wasn't my show. Because if it was my show, I wudda gave her such a smack," Pesci said of the shaven-headed singer. "I wudda grabbed her by — her eyebrows."



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