

Priest: Mass suicide inevitable because of Koresh's views

Leader delayed plan 'until he was ready'

By E. Lynn Ascoli
Catholic News Service

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The end result of the standoff at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, was inevitable because of the leader's apocalyptic vision, according to a Providence priest specializing in cults.

Father Paul E. Desmaris, head of the Diocese of Providence's Occult Awareness Ministry, said he was dismayed but not shocked by the reports that more than 80 Branch Davidian members had died in Waco April 19.

"It was just a matter of time" before the situation came to a head, he said. "In weeks past, I told others that the compound had all the elements present for mass suicide. I never thought there would be a peaceable end."

The talk of Armageddon by cult

leader David Koresh was the key to anticipating the tragic results, Father Desmaris said. Other key elements included the presence of a charismatic leader and followers who had "sold body, mind and soul into a dream."

The priest said Koresh "plugged into their fears" and subjected his followers to a type of brainwashing that left them with an "us-against-the-world," good vs. evil mentality.

"Koresh always intended to kill himself and the members of his cult

because he believed this type of mass suicide would fulfill his prophesy of Armageddon," he said.

"When he denied any type of suicide plan, he was just postponing FBI action until he was ready for the confrontation," Father Desmaris said.

The Providence priest said he had no doubt that Koresh had come to believe that he was in fact the second coming of Jesus, particularly as evidenced by his early teachings before he became so well known.

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