

Death toll on the rise in California quake

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Vatican officials conveyed their sorrow over the Jan. 17 Los Angeles earthquake in telegrams to Cardinal Roger M. Mahony. "The Holy Father shares your sorrow and pastoral concern" over quake victims, said Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano to Cardinal Mahony in a Jan. 18 telegram.

As of early Jan. 18, there were 33 confirmed dead from the quake, which registered 6.6 on the Richter scale.

Pope John Paul II "commends the victims to our heavenly father's eternal love and expresses his heartfelt sympathy to the families left in mourning," Cardinal Sodano said.

"In this time of particular need we hasten to express our fraternal solidarity in the Lord," said a Jan. 18 telegram from Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, head of the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, and Archbishop Justin Rigali, president of the Pontifical Ecclesial Academy.

Archbishop Rigali, in Vatican diplomatic service since 1964, is a Los Angeles native who was ordained a priest of the archdiocese in 1961.

Cardinal Mahony, in a Jan. 17 message to priests, religious and laity in the archdiocese, said, "This is a time when we need to work closely with each other, support one another, and be there to assist our neighboring parishes in every way that we can."

He suggested that priests check parish buildings for structural damage, avoid using any facility where safety was questionable, and report their situation to their dean.

Cardinal Mahony also suggested that priests "open your parish hall or other facilities if needed to accommodate those who are displaced in your community" and to "work with the local authorities as fully as possible."

The cardinal said that priests could "conduct any special Masses or prayer services that you feel are appropriate for your people and your situation."

Cardinal Mahony celebrated Mass in a chapel of St. Vibiana Cathedral, offering prayers for all residents affected by the temblor and emergency personnel just hours after the quake, which hit at 4:31 a.m. PST.

In a Jan. 17 memo to the pope, Cardinal Mahony said that "all 17 of our Catholic hospitals appear to be in sound condition, and all are open and receiving patients. They are offering care to all who need medical attention."

He added, "A beginning check of our churches, schools, convents, rectories and other Catholic facilities does show some damage — especially to the older buildings here in the archdiocese. I am working closely with our pastors and our deans to determine the extent of the damage in our parishes."

Cardinal Mahony also cited damage to the Los Angeles freeway system, broken gas lines, collapsed buildings, and damaged stores and shopping centers in his message to the pope.

Catholic Charities in the Los Angeles archdiocese was seeking immediate financial donations to help quake victims with their emergency needs, according to its executive director, Father Gregory A. Cox.

Financial donations could be made to Catholic Charities, Earthquake Disaster Fund, 1400 W. 9th St., Los Angeles, Calif. 90015.

Vatican: World must focus on Balkan war

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina intensified at the start of 1994, Pope John Paul II and the Vatican tried to shake the world's conscience with calls for prayer, reconciliation and international intervention.

The tone of the Vatican statements betrayed deep disappointment at the international community's failure to end the suffering in Bosnia after two years of mediation efforts.

At the same time, the church mobilized for a twin papal initiative for peace in the Balkans: a day of fasting Jan. 21 and a day of prayer Jan. 23.

"We are witnesses to a process of death in the Balkans and, unfortunately, we are powerless witnesses," the pope said Jan. 12.

He said the continuing human agony in Bosnia and the risk that the war could spread to other parts of Europe legitimized "action aimed at disarming the aggressor."

On Jan. 11, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace blasted the "inconsistencies of the international community" in dealing with the Balkan crisis and said it was a "crime" to simply allow the ethnic populations to keep waging war upon each other.

It shows "utterly shameful cowardli-

Sisters return home



AP/Wide World Photos
Catalina Toj holds her sister, Anita, in a camp for refugees located at a farm in Xajula, northwest of Guatemala City. More than 800 refugees who had been in exile for 12 years in Mexico were returned to their homeland Jan. 13. During the 1980s Guatemalans sought refuge in Mexico to escape fighting between the army and guerrillas.

ness" to allow the problem of ethnic minorities to be solved by expulsions, transfers and "extermination" as has happened in the Balkans, the council said.

While the pope and the Vatican have made innumerable appeals for a peaceful solution to the Balkan fighting, the recent declarations were unusually blunt regarding the failure of international mediation and pressure.

The statements came a week after the pope, in an unprecedented move, convened a group of religious and political experts at the Vatican to explore possibilities for peace in Bosnia.

The pope, who devoted his entire general audience to the topic Jan. 12, cited the tremendous civilian suffering in Bosnia, the "frightening and tragic" violations of human rights and the danger that the fighting there could become a European or even a world war.

For those reasons, he said, Bosnia is a perfect place for the international community to undertake "humanitarian intervention." He elaborated: "This is not primarily intervention of a military type, but any kind of action aimed at disarming the aggressor."

The pope's remarks coincided with a warning by leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, who said at a meeting in Brussels that they were prepared to carry out air strikes in response to Serbian shelling of the Bosnian capital,

Sarajevo. A papal spokesman refused to directly link the two positions, saying the pope was presenting moral principles and it was up to government and military leaders to apply them.

The pope returned to the situation in Bosnia in his annual address to the diplomatic community at the Vatican Jan. 15.

"The populations are still in the hands of torturers without morals. Innocent civilians are systematically being made the target of hidden snipers. Mosques and churches are being destroyed. The villages, emptied of their inhabitants, cannot be counted anymore," he said.

The pope said he wanted the diplomats to hear him "condemn in the most categorical manner the crimes against humanity which are being perpetrated before our very eyes." He said the fact that the United Nations was setting up a tribunal to deal with war crimes in the former Yugoslavia shows that the world is not blind to what is happening there.

U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Raymond Flynn said afterward that President Bill Clinton "shares the pope's frustration that the killing in Bosnia hasn't stopped despite our efforts."

"The president made clear during the NATO summit this week that we are serious about air strikes if the strangulation of Sarajevo continues," Flynn said.

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