

World welcomes agreement in Haiti

By Patricia Zapor
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Policy welcomed the agreement reached in Haiti Sept. 18 clearing the way for the return to office of the ousted president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"President Clinton is to be commended for walking the extra mile by commissioning these 11th-hour negotiations to avert the shedding of blood," said Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of Norwich, Conn., in a Sept. 19 statement.

He said the agreement's terms "show respect on the part of the international community and the United States for the sovereignty of the Haitian people."

Outlines of new plans and expectations for Haiti quickly followed sighs of relief over the announcement of the troop-supported settlement negotiated by former President Jimmy Carter to return Father Aristide to office.

The agreement, which averted a planned U.S. invasion, calls for Haiti's military rulers to step down by Oct. 15 to clear the way for Father Aristide's return.

Bishop Reilly said reconciliation within Haiti is still required. He urged all sides to agree on returning democracy, observing constitutional limits, respecting human rights and ensuring justice for the poor.

"The dignity of the Haitian people will be best served by a national consensus that will strengthen democratic government and the cause of justice for all of Haiti's people," he continued. "The only sure path to democracy in Haiti lies along the way of mutual respect, sincere dialogue and reconciliation."

In the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, Archbishop John R. Roach said his fears for Haiti's poor were allayed by the last-minute agreement.

"That was the grace of God," Archbishop Roach said. Like Bishop Reilly and other U.S. bishops, the archbishop said he feared an invasion to oust Haiti's de facto rulers would have failed to meet the church's criteria that a just war involve actions proportional to the good to be achieved.

"The poor were defenseless," he said. "I was fearful of a massive civilian loss of life and I didn't feel there was a proportional benefit."

Church groups who have watched the country's turmoil from the United States had several items on their agenda in the wake of the agreement, including:

- Resolving conflicts within Haiti's Catholic Church.
- Improving the situation of the thousands of Haitians being held at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.
- Bringing international observers to Haiti to monitor the process.

Catholic Relief Services was prepar-

ing to double the number of people it serves with food and basic household necessities.

The overseas relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic Church was doubling its budget for aid to Haiti to \$14 million, which will provide supplies for up to 400,000 people a day, said CRS spokeswoman Kasey Vannett. Those plans were in the works before U.S. troops were dispatched to Haiti and the agency was awaiting word of how its work would be affected by the shifting military and political situation there.

At the Washington Office on Haiti, plans were being laid well before the Sept. 18 agreement. Mercy Sister Mary Healy, director, said volunteers were being recruited to go to Haiti as civil rights monitors as soon as travel is permitted.

Sister Healy said sending people likely to attract high visibility would be particularly important in order to bring back "credible statements about conditions."

Her office also was continuing to press for temporary protected status for Haitians who fled their country and are being held at Guantanamo. Under temporary protected status, Haitians would be able to live and work in the United States until conditions in their homeland stabilize enough for them to return safely.

She also was asking the United States to unconditionally support Father Aristide's democratically elected government; to cut all U.S. ties to the Haitian military; and "for the United States to be honest and fair in future dealings with Haiti, particularly in allocation of aid."

"We need to move forward in supporting the sovereignty of the Haitian people and their freedom to determine their own future," said Sister Healy.

Food for the Poor, a Florida-based relief agency, launched a campaign to raise \$3 million to help Haiti, including rebuilding homes, restoring damaged social service buildings and launching a long-term educational and self-help programs, according to founder and director Ferdinand Mahfood.

As soon as a trade embargo is lifted, Food for the Poor plans to ship millions of dollars worth of goods that have been restricted for the last three years, such as beds for a boys' home and an ambulance, Mahfood said.

In an interview two days before the agreement was struck, Lawrence Pezzullo, former U.S. special envoy to Haiti, told Catholic News Service that reconciliation within the Catholic Church of Haiti will be essential to smoothing tensions between Haiti's rich and poor.

Pezzullo said Father Aristide's attitude toward other segments of Haitian society will be critical to the process.

Bishop lauds efforts to restore Fr. Aristide

NEW YORK — A Haitian bishop welcomed President Clinton's efforts to restore Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the presidency of Haiti, but opposed sending Haitian refugees to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Bishop Willy Romelus of Jeremie, Haiti, speaking in French through an interpreter, told Catholic News Service he would normally oppose sending outside military forces to his country, but was ready to accept it because "the people have their backs to the wall." However, he said, many Haitians sent to the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay have relatives in the United States and should be allowed to join them.

Pope, using cane, visits city in southeastern Italy

LECCE, Italy — Pope John Paul II resumed his pastoral visits to Italian dioceses Sept. 17-18, basking in the cheers of the crowd in the southeastern city of Lecce. The pope thanked the thousands gathered to welcome him in the coastal town for their enthusiasm and said he would try to bring that spirit back to Rome with him. Amid continuing concerns about Pope John Paul's health after he broke his leg in late April, the only novelty of his first Italian trip in 1994 was that he was using a cane and relying on others for assistance in climbing stairs.

Nuns' gallery raises eyebrows, closes down

SAN ANTONIO — An exhibit in an art gallery run by a religious order was closed three days after it opened amid an outcry about the works' depiction of sexuality and faith. The gallery operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word on the campus of Incarnate Word College opened an exhibit titled "Spiritual, Sensual, Sexual" on Sept. 10. It was scheduled to run into October, but after hundreds of callers complained to the archdiocese and the religious order, the Sisters of Charity closed the exhibit Sept. 13 to determine what to do about it. Among the pieces on display were a painting of an angel having sexual intercourse on an altar and a clay sculpture of genitals in flower-like formations.

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