

WORLD News

Panelists look at ways to heal violent society

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Guns, gangs and government were three targets of a Dec. 3 teleconference on violence featuring a blue-ribbon panel of politicians, clergy and experts.

Playing the parts of concerned citizens, the dozen panelists were asked how they would counter the violence in fictional accounts of a husband's increasing abuse of his wife and the gang slaying of a 10-year-old boy for unknowingly wearing a rival gang's colors.

Panelists included former congressman John Father Robert Drinan, presidential adviser George Stephanopoulos, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and Dolores Leckey, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth.

Father Drinan drew applause from the audience at the Washington National Episcopal Cathedral when he said, "The churches have to do something to get rid of the 70 million guns in this country."

Such levels of gun possession are found only in the United States, he said, and "not in any civilized country — not England, not Canada or Japan. The churches have to crusade against guns."

Addressing the gang scenario, Isaac Fulwood, Washington's retired police chief, said it was not unusual for police to round up gang leaders for a "shoot to cool down the violence."

But that is only a temporary measure, he said. "We have got to reinvent the community," Fulwood added. Because there is no structure in gang members' own families, he said, "gangs are their families."

Stephanopoulos, assigned the role of City Councilman "Newt Stephanopoulos" in one role-playing exercise, said he would say to citizens, "I'm going to tell you something you're not going to believe: I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

But he warned that government would not be able to do as much as citizens want it to do because of budget cuts. "The churches are going to have to pick up the slack," Stephanopoulos said. "Because if they don't do it, nobody will."

Fulwood criticized the wave of

"three strikes and you're out" proposals that would send a third-time convicted felon to prison for life.

Noting that his own brother was violently killed, Fulwood said violent criminals don't consider the consequences of their actions. "We ought to get to the front end of the cycle to prevent these things from happening," he said.

But O'Connor replied that judges should have the ability to "carry out the sentence that the people designed."

She added that the wealthy should find it in their "enlightened self-interest" to help the poor in their community.

Leckey said churches "should rejoice" if they find themselves "inundated" by women and men seeking help in spouse abuse situations.

She said the U.S. bishops' pamphlet on domestic violence, "When I Preach... Remember Me," is particularly helpful. "Never underestimate the power of the pulpit," Leckey said.

Father Drinan praised the bishops' new pastoral message on violence, "Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Response."

And United Methodist Bishop Felton May of Harrisburg, Pa., lauded the bishops' 1986 pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All."

Crediting the pastoral for its "proactive, not reactive" stance on issues, Bishop May said, "If these ideas were implemented, there'd not only be less violence in the U.S.A., but also less violence in the world."

Moderator Tim Russert, best known as host of NBC's "Meet the Press," said he was asked "why a nice Catholic boy would spend his Saturday afternoon here, at an Episcopal cathedral."

His answer: "I did this for my son. I hope that from some of the inspiration from this panel, some other 9-year-old boy will have the same kind of love that my son Luke knows, that they hear the sweet sounds of Christmas rather than gunfire."

The teleconference was shown live at hundreds of satellite downlink sites. The Catholic Telecommunications Network of America made it available on satellite, as did Episcopal and Methodist teleconference facilities.

It was also taped for future showing on PBS and the Faith & Values cable channel.

Pope's Christmas schedule is set

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As workers labored under drizzling skies to erect a nativity scene in St. Peter's Square, the Vatican published a long list of papal commitments for the Christmas season.

The papal holiday preparations include a Dec. 11 blessing of nativity scene figures brought to the square by Roman families, schoolchildren and parishes.

University students in Rome are scheduled to join the pope Dec. 15 in St. Peter's Basilica for a special Mass in preparation for Christmas.

The list of appointments concludes Jan. 9 with the pope's annual address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican. Just two days later, Pope John Paul is scheduled to begin an 11-day trip to the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Australia and Sri Lanka.

According to the schedule:

— The pope will meet with Vatican of-

ficials, cardinals residing in Rome and Roman clergy Dec. 22 to give his Christmas greetings.

— On Dec. 24 the pope celebrates midnight Mass in St. Peter's Basilica. — On Christmas, the pope celebrates Mass in St. Peter's Basilica before his traditional midday blessing "urbi et orbi" ("to the city and the world") and a speech from the balcony of the basilica.

— The traditional papal Mass of Thanksgiving marking the end of the year will be held Dec. 31 at the Jesuits' St. Ignatius Loyola Church in Rome.

— Pope John Paul will celebrate morning Mass Jan. 1 in St. Peter's Basilica to mark the feast of Mary Mother of God and the World Day of Peace.

— On Jan. 6, feast of the Epiphany, the pope will celebrate Mass in the basilica and ordain new bishops.

— On the Jan. 8 feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Pope John Paul II will celebrate Mass in the Sistine Chapel and will baptize several infants.

Christmas



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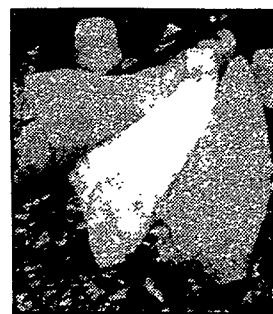
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