

## Pope proves physical stamina on trip

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II ended a 10-day visit to Asia and Australia disappointed by a snub from Sri Lankan Buddhists, but proving he has the physical stamina to continue being an itinerant preacher.

The Jan. 12-21 trip was seen by the public as a test of the pope's health nine months after undergoing surgery to replace the top of his broken right thigh bone.

He told reporters on the plane he plans this year to make up for canceled visits to Belgium and the United Nations, as well as visiting Africa to formally close last year's special African synod and the Czech Republic for a beatification.

After four days of World Youth Day activities in Manila and a special message of encouragement to Catholics in China, the rest of the mid-January trip centered on the first beatifications in Papua New Guinea, Australia and Sri Lanka.

The pope's steps were halting throughout the trip, but the cane he uses to walk with became just as much a prop for his improvisations and joking as a support for his weight.

The only time Pope John Paul looked worryingly weak was during a Jan. 20 welcoming ceremony in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He had just ridden 20 miles in the glass-enclosed popemobile. Aides said the air conditioning was broken, so the pope stopped for about 20 minutes at a Catholic Church along the route to

rest, pray and change his sweat-drenched cassock.

He began the visit to Colombo by reaching out to Buddhists offended by his best-selling book.

"I come as a friend," he said. "I come as a pilgrim of good will, with nothing but peace in my heart."

Buddhist leaders boycotted his Jan. 21 meeting with leaders of Sri Lanka's non-Christian faiths because of the pope's answers to a question about Buddhism in the book, "Crossing the Threshold of Hope."

The book described Buddhist philosophy and practice as largely "negative" because of its emphasis on detachment from the world. It called the religion atheistic because the believer's goal is not union with God, "but nirvana — the state of perfect detachment."

Sri Lanka's population is 70 percent Buddhist, 15 percent Hindu, 7 percent Muslim, 6.8 percent Catholic and 1 percent Protestant.

"I ardently hope that my visit will serve to strengthen the good will between us, and that it will reassure everyone of the Catholic Church's desire for interreligious dialogue and cooperation in building a more just and fraternal world," he said at the welcoming ceremony.

Meeting Hindu and Muslim leaders the next morning, the pope said religious leaders must speak to each other.

"It is necessary to be together," he said. "Not being together is dangerous."

In a subsequent speech to Sri Lanka's Catholic bishops, the pope said interreligious dialogue and cooperation are

needed "to promote respect for human life and concern for honesty and integrity in all areas of socio-economic and political life, as well as in working for the cause of peace and solidarity between individuals and social groups."

In addition to calling Catholics in Papua New Guinea, Australia and Sri Lanka to imitate their new "blesseds," the pope called for peace and for special concern for the poorest in those countries.

Arriving Jan. 16 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, the pope offered prayers for the inhabitants of Bougainville off the mainland's east coast, a copper-mining area torn by six years of guerrilla warfare.

"If you have been treated unjustly, I invite you to remove bitterness from your hearts," he said to the Bougainvillians pressing for independence after government refusals to give them a larger share of the copper revenues.

"If you bear arms unjustly, I invite you to put them down and seek reconciliation," he said.

During his two-day stay, the pope beatified Peter To Rot, a married lay catechist martyred by Japanese occupation forces just before the end of World War II.

Beatifying Oratorian Father Joseph Vaz in Colombo, the pope appealed for peace between Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils.



AP/Wide World Photos

### Still smiling

Jacques Gaillot, the liberal bishop removed by the Vatican last week, smiles outside a government welfare office where he joined scores of homeless protesters in Paris Jan. 16 to demand that city and national authorities increase aid for young people without homes or jobs. Thousands of people across France demonstrated the day before in support of Bishop Gaillot, who has vowed to keep speaking out on social issues.

## Pope decries killing abortionists

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT TO ROME — No matter how frustrating the battle against legalized abortion, killing a physician who performs abortions can never be justified, Pope John Paul II said.

"One cannot do it," the pope said, responding to a question from Catholic News Service during the Jan. 21 papal flight from Sri Lanka to Rome at the end of a 10-day visit to Asia and Australia.

When asked about people who say killing one doctor saves the lives of numerous unborn children, the pope

said, "the end does not justify the means."

The struggle is difficult, he said, but all life must be respected.

Bishops in Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine urged a moratorium on peaceful protests and prayer outside abortion clinics following shootings at two Boston-area clinics Dec. 30. John C. Salvi III, a Catholic from New Hampshire, was charged in the shootings, which killed two and wounded five others.

Earlier in 1994, Paul Hill was convicted and sentenced to death in the killings of a doctor and clinic escort outside an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Fla.

## Japanese archdiocese on front line of aid

By Father Jim Colligan  
Catholic News Service

KOBE, Japan — Volunteers and victims sorted through low stacks of newly arrived emergency supplies in the covered parking area of Sacred Heart Church.

Archbishop Hisao Yasuda of Osaka had selected the parish as the forward base for the three-stage relief effort he launched in the wake of the earthquake, which killed upwards of 5,000 people and left tens of thousands homeless.

Father Nobuyuki Matsuura was assigned to direct assistance to the survivors, which was launched three days after the temblor hit. Sacred Heart's pastor, Father Gerard Gouineau of the Paris Foreign Mission Society put parish facilities at the disposal of priests, sisters and laity involved in assisting earthquake victims. The pastor himself gave an elderly couple shelter in his own room.

"I wish we had been there in the crucial first two days," Father Matsuura said.

Parish priests in Kobe when the disaster struck jumped in to help immediately. But it took a couple of days for public and private agencies to mobilize the collection and distribution of relief goods.

The needs of the survivors were basic — food, water, shelter, warm clothing. Demand soared for water-repellent vinyl sheets half the size of a tennis court. Rich blue in color, the sheets were used as tents, covering for damaged roofs, and as ground cloths for families forced to sleep outdoors.

Everything had to be brought into Kobe from the outside.

For Catholic volunteers, the source of relief supplies at first was the seminary near Osaka, some 30 miles away. By the third day, the distribution point was moved to the archbishop's residence, 15 miles distant from the disaster zone.

But even then, debris in the roadways, buckled paving, detours around damaged buildings and bumper-to-bumper traffic slowed the delivery of goods.

Relief vehicles snaked their way through an obstacle course of destruction to reach their destinations. Nightfall made the trip even more difficult and treacherous.

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**EDITORS' NOTE:** Catholic Relief Services is currently accepting funds for victims of the Japan earthquake. Contributions should be sent to: Catholic Relief Services, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, Md. 21203-7090 (Attention: Japan Earthquake).



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