

Leaders hail pope's call for unity

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope John Paul II's encyclical calling for further steps in ecumenism brought words of welcome from Catholic and Christian leaders worldwide.

"Ut Unum Sint" ("That All May Be One") "clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to ecumenism by the pope and, through him, the Roman Catholic Church," said a World Council of Churches statement June 1.

In the encyclical, released May 30, the pope said the unity of all Christians is God's will and is at the heart of the mission Christ entrusted to his followers. As a concrete sign of his commitment to Christian unity, the pope also called for a new discussion of the authority and ministry of the pope.

The WCC praised the encyclical's "strong theology of baptism, which provides a foundation for the fellowship we already share."

The encyclical recognizes "that different religious traditions have special gifts which can be mutually shared," it added.

The pope acknowledged that the papacy "constitutes a difficulty for most other Christians," and he apologized for

times when the exercise of papal authority brought pain to other Christians.

Since the bishop of Rome must ensure the unity of the church, his primacy must include real power and authority or it "would be illusory," he said.

Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, detailed the origins of papal primacy during a press conference last week.

"When in a church or between churches there were problems or disputes, they went to Rome to ask the bishop for mediation and eventually, if it was necessary, to make a decision in order to maintain the unity of communion," Cardinal Cassidy said.

Bishops, nominated by their local churches, would request communion with the bishop of Rome, he added. "And when the bishop of Rome accepted that bishop into communion, all of the churches automatically accepted that bishop in communion... This was an essential part of his primacy, to bring unity."

In other reaction to the document, the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of

Churches, praised "Ut Unum Sint" as "an urgently important study document for all Christians of our age."

"In these days in which religious differences are often exploited and exacerbated, Pope John Paul II re-asserts the important contribution ecumenism offers to the establishment of peace," she said.

A Church of England statement issued jointly last week by the office of Anglican Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury and the Anglican Church's Council For Christian Unity hailed the encyclical.

"At a time when there is growing impatience with the ecumenical movement and a tendency to give up on the search for visible unity, this urgent call by the pope to continue along a path which is difficult yet full of joy" encourages us to continue with greater determination," it said.

"In particular we look forward to exploring more deeply the ministry of unity which belongs to the bishop of Rome, in the light of the work currently being undertaken by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission."

EDITORS' NOTE: To obtain a copy of "Ut Unum Sint," contact *Origins, CNS Documentary Service*. The text appears in *Origins*, Vol. 25, No. 4, and is dated June 8, 1995. The price of one copy is \$5; multiple-copy rates also are available. The price includes postage and handling. Payment must accompany order. Write: *Origins, CNS, 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1100; or call 202/541-3290.*

CRS assesses needs in town after quake

By Bill Pritchard
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholic Relief Services is among a number of relief agencies offering help to the victims of the earthquake that destroyed an oil town on Sakhalin Island in Russia's Far East.

"We're particularly concerned about the post-traumatic stress" being experienced by survivors of the quake that turned the town of Neftegorsk to rubble May 28, said the CRS director in the region Frank Carlin. He made the comments in a telephone interview from his base in the Pacific coast port city of Vladivostok, Russia.

"It seems like everybody we've talked to has lost their children, their spouse" or other relatives, he said in the May 30 interview.

"We haven't connected with a whole family yet," Carlin said.

Carlin said he had sent a team to the island to assess what assistance CRS should provide survivors.

He said that clothing and bedding are greater material needs than food at this point because survivors have lost virtually all of their possessions at a time when the weather on Sakhalin still hovers around freezing at night and "there's still ice on the water."

As far as the rescue and assistance effort, "the biggest danger you have to watch for is overreaction," Carlin said because the tragedy is local and the immediate needs are "very, very specific."

In fact, Carlin said that there are so many members of Russian emergency teams and crews from foreign assistance agencies it's hard finding food and lodging in Okha, the town on the island's northern tip where survivors have been moved and which also serves as a staging point for the emergency effort.

Officials at CRS headquarters in Baltimore said that the agency is coordinating its efforts with other Catholic agencies in Russia and from Japan and with Russia's Department of Social Protection.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Donations for quake victims are being taken by Russian Earthquake Relief, Catholic Relief Services, 209 W. Fayette St., Baltimore, MD 21201-3443.

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