

WORLD & NATION

Bishops urge caution on Medicaid

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. bishops are "increasingly concerned with the direction" Congress is taking in reforming Medicaid, according to the chairman of their Domestic Policy Committee.

"We recognize that reforming Medicaid must be part of budget restructuring efforts," Auxiliary Bishop John H. Ricard of Baltimore said in a Sept. 25 letter to all members of the House and to the Senate Finance Committee.

"But we strongly urge that changes in the Medicaid program reflect a recognition of the dependence of the poor and the elderly on Medicaid in addition to budgetary considerations," he added.

House and Senate committees were working in late September to cut \$182 billion from the Medicaid program over seven years, as called for in the congressional budget resolution.

Floor action on the entire budget reconciliation package — including reforms of Medicaid and Medicare, welfare reform and a possible tax cut — was ex-



Members of the National Council of Senior Citizens march Sept. 22 outside the U.S. Capitol to protest the Republican proposal to cut Medicare.

pected sometime in October.

Medicaid, created in 1965 along with Medicare, is a \$155 billion joint federal-state health plan for the poor, including low-income disabled and elderly people.

The Republican plan for Medicaid re-

form would throw out nearly all the federal rules while requiring states to spend 40 percent of their "MediGrants" on low-income families, the disabled and elderly. They could spend the rest as they wanted on their state's health needs.

Peace means ending nationalism in religion

MILAN, Italy — Balkan religions must be cleansed of nationalism if they are to bring peace to the ex-Yugoslavia, said Archbishop Franc Perko of Belgrade, Serbia.

"A nationalistic faith cannot contribute to the realization of a multicultural society," he said in an interview in the Oct. 1 Milan-based Catholic newspaper, *Avvenire*.

A religion "assumes negative characteristics from the moment nationalistic elements become kneaded into it," he said.

Warring factions in the ex-Yugoslavia strongly incorporate religion as part of their ethnic identity, and many international peace plans have involved dividing disputed territory into ethnic enclaves.

The archbishop said all three Balkan religions were mixed with nationalism and he accused the Serbs of being primarily responsible for the fighting through a desire for territorial gain.

Catholics form 5 percent of the 10.7 million population of the new Yugoslavia, composed of Serbia and Montenegro.

Autonomy to increase Palestinian obligations

WASHINGTON — The new agreement expanding Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank must be met with expanded obligations on the part of Palestinians, Israelis and the world community, Worcester, Mass., Bishop Daniel P. Reilly said Sept. 28 in Washington.

"Treaties can establish peace only where there is a firm will on both sides to see that commitments are honored," said Bishop Reilly, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Policy.

The agreement signed Sept. 28 extends self-rule to more than 1 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and calls for free elections.

Casey pledges to push pro-life cause in 1996

NEW YORK — Robert P. Casey, former Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, said in a New York interview that he would be actively supporting the pro-life cause during the political campaign next year.

Casey, a native of New York, was in New York to receive the annual Cardinal Cooke Right to Life Award at a luncheon attended by some 600 people Sept. 26.

Virgin Islands face daunting recovery efforts

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — More than a week after Hurricane Marilyn devastated the U.S. Virgin Islands, St. Thomas Island was still without power, phones or water, said Barbara Gilliard-Payne, director of Catholic Social Services on the islands.

"It's worse than anything I ever saw before," Gilliard-Payne said in a telephone interview with Catholic News Service Sept. 25.

She said Emmaus Retreat House, a two-story building that served as a diocesan conference center and the residence of Bishop Elliott G. Thomas, was "a pile of rubble."

Gilliard-Payne, who was in the Washington area on business when the hurricane hit Sept. 16, returned to the Virgin Islands a few days later to assess damage, then returned to Washington area, mixing previously scheduled business with efforts to move relief work ahead.

She said Bishop Thomas asked her to bring back two messages to Catholics across the rest of the United States: a request for continued prayers and thanks for funds contributed to help the hurricane victims recover and rebuild.

Catholic Charities USA made an initial donation of \$25,000 and bishops throughout the country have been asked

to take up collections in parishes for the Virgin Islands.

Most parishes on St. Thomas and St. Croix — where almost all Virgin Islanders live — suffered some damage, ranging from blown off roofs or blown out windows to complete destruction.

Gilliard-Payne She cited generators as an immediate top priority. The power plant on St. Thomas was not destroyed, she said, but "nearly every transformer

on the island was."

Without power, water cannot be pumped from cisterns, making sanitation a major obstacle to reopening shelters, schools or other facilities.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Donations may be sent to: Disaster Response Office — Hurricane Marilyn, Catholic Charities USA, 1731 King St. No. 200, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Heidi Emmert



German concert organist, Heidi Emmert, has taken prizes at seven major international organ performance competitions and has been honored by two German states. Ms. Emmert is a native of Wurzburg and studied at the Musikhochschule there. She earned her concert diploma in organ and her church music diploma from the Musikhochschule in Detmold, Germany where she is now a member of the teaching faculty. Her principal teachers in Germany were Gunther Kaunzinger and Gerhard Weinberger. She studied with Russell Saunders at the Eastman School of Music during the 1991-1992 academic year.

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