## WORLD & NATION

## Pope eases schedule due to illness

By John Thavis Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY - Sidelined for nearly a week by what the Vatican called a digestive problem, Pope John Paul II led a brief beatification ceremony before withdrawing for several more days of rest.

The pope appeared tired and somewhat drawn as he read beatification decrees for two 19th-century missionaries March 17, and he had a slight cough. But he walked without difficulty and smiled as he greeted many in the overflow crowd in St. Peter's Basilica.

Later the pope gave a blessing from his apartment window and thanked the faithful for their "spiritual closeness" in the preceding days. He did not refer explicitly to his illness.

For the 75-year-old pontiff, it was the first public appearance in a week. The Vatican said the pope was recovering from a mild fever that began March 12 and subsided two days later, caused by an unspecified problem involving the digestive tract.

The pope decided to make the abbreviated beatification appearance despite his doctor's recommendation of several days of rest. He had originally been scheduled to preside over the entire three-hour ceremony.

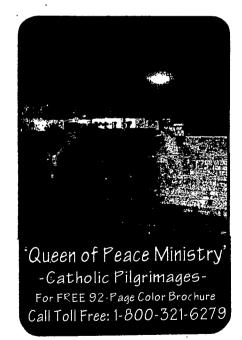
After proceeding down the main aisle of the church without a cane, he greeted missionaries near the altar and conversed with a group of sick people. He left the ceremony at the start of the Mass, which was celebrated in the pope's place by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state.

Dear Romans and pilgrims, I thank you for your spiritual closeness these last few days," the pope told some 30,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square after the Mass. He received warm applause from

After day-to-day uncertainty over the pope's schedule, the Vatican on March 16 announced a cutback in the pope's activities over the coming week. A one-day visit to the Italian city of Siena was postponed from March 19 to March 30, and the weekly general audience March 20 was canceled for the second week in a row. Instead, the pope was to bless pilgrims from his apartment window.

Vatican sources said church officials and

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doctors were concerned that the pope be well-rested for his heavy schedule of public events in early April for Holy Week and Easter. With several lengthy outdoor ceremonies, it is considered the most physically taxing time of the

year for the pope.

Meanwhile, the pope's daily schedule of private meetings and public talks was canceled, too.

Commenting during the first week of the pope's disorder, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navar-ro-Valls repeatedly said the pontiff was in good overall condition and in good spirits. He said the pope had undergone a routine series of medical tests at the onset of the fever, and that there were no immediate plans for additional tests.

The pope was eating lightly and taking antibiotics, the spokesman said. He was being treated by his regular doctor, Italian Dr. Renato Buzzonetti.

In past years, the pope has been treated by doctors at Rome's Gemelli hospital for a variety of injuries and ailments. ance in a week due to illness. They included an assassination

attempt in 1981, when the pontiff was shot in the intestines; a viral blood disorder shortly after the 1981 shooting; removal of an intestinal tumor described as noncancerous in 1992; a shoulder injury after a fall in 1993; and partial hip replacement surgery following a fall in 1994.



Pope John Paul II waves to the crowd gathered at the Vatican for a beatification ceremony March 17. It was the pope's first public appear-

> Dr. Francesco Crucitti, the surgeon who operated on the pope in 1992, told Catholic News Service that the pontiff's present problems had nothing to do with the intestinal tumor that was removed four years ago. "This is certain," he said

#### Pontiff prays for victims of shootings in Scotland

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul IL offered his condolences and prayers to all those suffering from the "senseless violence" of a gunman who killed 16 young children and their teacher at a primary school in Scotland, "The Holy Father offers fervent prayers for the families and friends of the victims and for all mourning their loss," said a March 14 telegram to Bishop Vincent Logan of Dunkeld, Scotland

The murdered children and their 12 wounded classmates, all members of a class of 5- and 6-year-olds at the Dunblane Primary School, were playing in the school gym March 13 when Thomas Hamilton came in and opened fire, then killed himselfs.

#### Mother Teresa clarifies views on royals; divorce:

WASHINGTON - Modies Ter was raints (ON — Mother Teresa founder of the Missionaries of Char-ity, issued a clarification of her views on divorce after quotes attributed to her on the marital wors of Prince in April issue of Ladies Home journal.

Advocating divorce is clearly against Catholic teachings and my own convictions, the said in a March 12 statement. It have never advised or encouraged a musband and wife to seek divorce. I always tell couples having trouble to pray — alone and to gether as a family. The form of the Charles and Princess Diana appe gether as a family. The topic of royal relationship came up in an interview with writer Daphne Barak

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