

WORLD & NATION

Floods devastate Mexican regions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope John Paul II offered his prayers and sympathy to victims of a hurricane that struck Mexico's Pacific Coast in early October.

Meanwhile, the Mexican Archdiocese of Acapulco has moved quickly to direct aid to the numerous victims of Hurricane Pauline, an archdiocesan official said.

A telegram in the pope's name expressed his concern for the families who suffered losses in the storm, which estimates said left hundreds dead, hundreds more missing and thousands homeless.

The pope also asked civil authorities to do their best to deliver relief assistance in a timely fashion.

to the stricken populations. The relief efforts in the first few days after the storm were criticized as chaotic by local protesters and politicians.

A major problem is that there are so many poor people in the area that it is

difficult for incoming relief workers to distinguish the real victims, said Father Pedro Torres Garcia, archdiocesan financial officer.

He described the relief efforts in an Oct. 13 telephone interview.

The archdiocese is distributing church aid directly through the parishes, with the parish priests — who know the local residents — personally handing the aid to the people, said Father Torres.

The immediate concern is "to take care of the victims, not try to solve the overall poverty problem," he said.



CNS/Reuters

A boy surveys the wreckage left by Hurricane Pauline in Acapulco, Mexico, Oct. 13. The Red Cross reports as many as 400 dead in the wake of the Oct. 8-9 storm.

"Much of the help is not reaching the real victims," he added.

The government estimated at least 173 people died in the storm and more than 200 were missing, but the Red Cross said 400 people had died.

Chinese bishop arrested Oct. 8

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding, China, a prominent member of the underground Catholic Church, was being held by the Baoding Public Security Bureau after months in hiding.

The bishop's Oct. 8 arrest in Xinji, China, was reported Oct. 11 by the Cardinal Kung Foundation in Stamford, Conn. At the Vatican, an official said "two diverse sources" had confirmed Bishop Su's arrest.

The last time Bishop Su was arrested was in late April or May 1996, together with Auxiliary Bishop An Shuxin and a hundred of the faithful from Donglu, site of a Marian shrine. Police reportedly later partially destroyed the shrine.

Joseph Kung, head of the Cardinal Kung Foundation, said Oct. 13 that "no one knows exactly what happened to Bishop Su." He said that beginning in May 1996, Bishop Su managed to go into hiding in various places until his arrest Oct. 8.

While in hiding, the bishop wrote an open letter to the Chinese government demanding that it respect the religious freedom promised in the Chinese constitution, the Kung Foundation statement said.

Vatican Radio reported Oct. 11 that 65-year-old Bishop Su heads a "very lively and persecuted Catholic community."

In 1957, Chinese Catholics split over the setting up of the government-approved Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which rejects papal authority and elects bishops without Vatican approval.

An underground church in China, estimated to number in the millions, professes loyalty to the pope. At the parish level, there is some mingling of the two, and some government-approved bishops have reportedly secretly reconciled with Rome.

Bishops' official condemns presidential veto

WASHINGTON (CNS) — President Clinton's second veto of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act has not resolved the issue and will spark an intensified effort to override it, according to the U.S. bishops' pro-life spokeswoman.

In a statement issued following the Oct. 10 veto, Helen Alvare said the president's action "will only ensure a renewed grassroots effort by Catholics and other people of good will to win the congressional sup-

port needed to override his veto."

Alvare, director of planning and information for the bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, said the president "ignored an overwhelming consensus of legislators, religious leaders, medical professionals and the American people: the violent killing of children in the very process of being born disgraces our nation."

"We will not rest until everything possible has been done to end the horror of par-

tial-birth abortion," she said.

In a 296-132 vote Oct. 8, the House approved the Senate's slightly amended version of a bill that would ban the controversial procedure except to save the mother's life. The House had passed its version of the ban in March.

The latest House vote is more than the two-thirds necessary to override a veto, but the Senate vote of 64-36 in May was three votes short.



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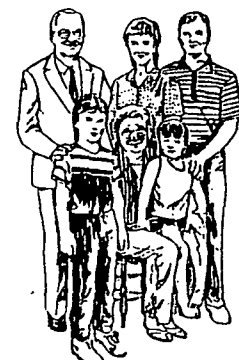
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