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Students, seen through a bullet hole, return to classes at the Catholic Trisakti University in Jakarta May 18, but no classes were being held. Police shot and killed six students at the university May 12, triggering widespread riots in the Indonesian capital.

Pope prays for Indonesia

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II prayed for calm and dialogue in Indonesia after demonstrations and riots claimed hundreds of lives.

During his midday address May 17 at the Vatican, the pope said he had been following the events in Indonesia "with profound concern."

"The violence of these past few days has provoked the deaths of many people, along with enormous destruction, carrying the country along dangerous paths," the pope said.

"All of our human and Christian solidarity goes to that noble nation at this moment," he said. "We pray that with dia-

logue and mutual respect for persons and laws, the common good of the Indonesian people will be assured."

After police violently broke up student demonstrations calling for political and economic reforms May 12, more demonstrations paralyzed Indonesia's capital. Machine-gun bearing troops were called in, and a rioting and looting rampage resulted in the deaths of some 500 people.

President Suharto, who has ruled the country for 32 years, promised to reverse partially the recent heavy increase on fuel prices and to make changes in his Cabinet, which has been criticized widely.

Student groups, however, said they would continue their protests, demanding wide-ranging reforms in the government and the economy.

Bishops' official counsels limited response to India

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A U.S. bishops' official urged the Clinton administration to exempt humanitarian and development aid if the U.S. government imposes restrictions on India because of its nuclear tests.

Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick, chairman of the U.S. bishops' International Policy Committee, also said that the United States' moral credibility in urging India to forgo nuclear weapons depended on U.S. willingness to ratify the comprehensive test ban treaty.

Archbishop McCarrick's letter to National Security Adviser Samuel Berger, dated May 15 and released May 19, quoted the U.S. bishops' 1993 pastoral letter, "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace."

In that letter, the bishops said "an active commitment by the United States to nuclear disarmament and the strengthening of collective security is the only moral basis for temporarily retaining our deterrent and our insistence that other nations forgo these weapons."

Archbishop McCarrick told Berger he shared "the dismay of the Clinton administration and so many others at the decision of the Indian government to test nuclear weapons."

But he said the government must "take due care to avoid imposing burdens" that the poor "can scarcely bear."

"It is regrettable that India has diverted scarce resources to develop weapons of mass destruction when so many of its own people suffer intolerable misery," the archbishop said. "Nevertheless, U.S. government aid is vital for large numbers of India's most vulnerable people."

Meanwhile in Tokyo, the Japanese bishops' Council for Justice and Peace said India had destroyed its heritage by conducting the nuclear tests, reported UCA News, an Asian church news agency based in Thailand.

In a May 12 letter addressed to the Indian ambassador to Japan, Siddharth Singh, the council said, "As a nation with Mahatma Gandhi's vision of nonviolence, it is tragic to witness India destroy its own heritage of liberation and national identity."

"We have admired the great religions of your nation and their traditions of nonviolence. It was with your leadership that we, along with others, had hoped to bring our world into a truly peaceful era," the council said.

"Where now will the world find a voice of peace on behalf of those people and those nations who stand in the threat of your nuclear weapons?" it asked.

Speaking as "the only nation that has experienced the hell and destruction of nuclear weapons," the Japanese group wrote that India's blasts have damaged "the fragile efforts" toward "the future destruction of all nuclear weapons."

An Indian government statement said the three underground nuclear tests May 11 at Pokhran, a desert region in the northwestern state of Rajasthan, demonstrated India's capability to manufacture nuclear weapons. On May 13, India performed two more nuclear tests in the same region.

U.S. officials have expressed concern that the tests will increase tensions among India, Pakistan and China.



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