

WORLD & NATION

Hundreds feared dead due to Chiapas floods

MEXICO CITY (CNS) — A bishop in one of the regions hardest hit by flooding in southern Mexico called for national and international solidarity with flood victims.

More than one week after early September floods devastated communities along Mexico's southern Pacific coast, about 500,000 people remained isolated Sept. 17 in communities cut off by mudslides and fallen bridges.

In a written statement Sept. 15, Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel of Tapachula called for solidarity with the residents of his coastal diocese, one of three dioceses in the state of Chiapas and one of the areas most affected by the floods.

Bishop Arizmendi said this was the worst disaster to strike the region. Together with the suffering produced by the large number of deaths, "we share the anguish of many people about those who are still missing, probably swept away by the irresistible force of the rivers," he said.

Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia of San Cristobal de las Casas and Coadjutor Bishop Raul Vera Lopez called on all the parishes in their diocese help gather humanitarian aid to help people in the neighboring Diocese of Tapachula.

Pope John Paul II authorized a donation of \$50,000 from the office of the papal nuncio to aid the national Caritas effort on behalf of the victims, and the U.S. Embassy contributed \$25,000.

"His Holiness renews the expression of his sentiments of participation which he has already communicated, as well as his apostolic blessing, animating the effort of Caritas and of all those who are giving of themselves to ease the suffering of so many who have been harshly affected," said a statement from the nuncio's office Sept. 15.

Chiapas state police said their count of

the dead stood at 181 Sept. 16, while journalists put the number at about 230. Church authorities, however, said they expected the final death toll to rise above 500 once aid workers reach rural communities.

Chiapas was already beset by civil strife that has forced about 15,000 people from their homes in the past five years.

Since the flooding, Mexicans have taken blankets, food and cash to collection centers set up across the country. The Mexican Red Cross appealed for economic aid to cover costs of gasoline, food and transportation.

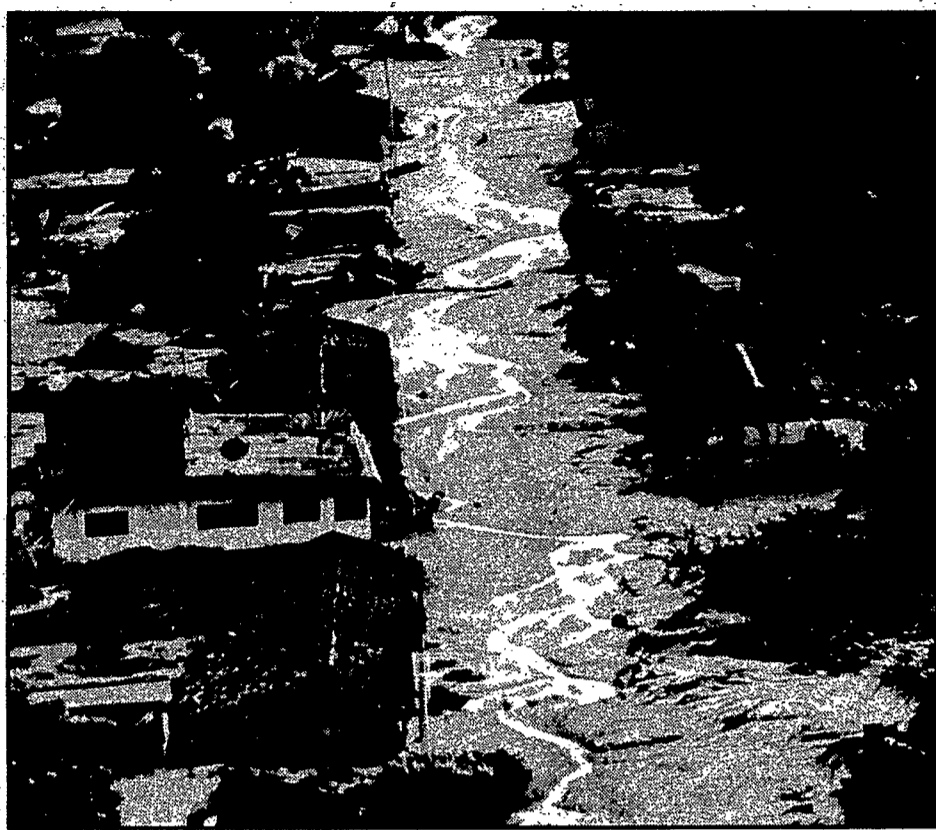
The floods occurred in the midst of campaigning for elections Oct. 4, when voters are expected to fill 111 municipal halls and 24 state congressional seats. Opposition parties and the federal secretary of health have called for postponement of the elections, at least in zones affected by the floods. But state Gov. Roberto Albores Guillen said Chiapas is prepared to carry out the electoral process, in spite of the damage in the coastal region.

On Sept. 16, Bishop Arizmendi told reporters in Tapachula that support for continuing the electoral process showed "a lack of respect" to the affected communities.

He refused, however, to speculate about allegations that humanitarian aid was being manipulated by the government for political ends.

He said there have been cases "of those who have robbed those who are most in need," but most people in Chiapas have responded with fraternity and a feeling of collaboration. He praised the cooperation among military authorities, civilians, the church and nongovernmental organizations.

Priests and catechists gathered information about the needs and whereabouts



Reuters/CNS

The village of Valdivia in Chiapas, Mexico, is inundated with mud and water after another in a series of heavy storms.

of flood victims.

"We have created a network among the priests and catechists, and more information is coming in," said Father Guillermo Nieto of the Tapachula diocesan social ministries office. "We are working with the state civil protection authorities, municipal governments and the political parties to get food, medicine and clothing to the communities."

The Red Cross representative in Chiapas, Cipriano Villegas Apodaca, said the

rain had eased since Sept. 10 and that the level of rivers had dropped, making it easier to reach people stranded by the floods.

"There will be a second phase to this," he warned. "There will be even more hunger in the months ahead, because the rains destroyed the crops. The corn was almost ready to harvest, but it is wasted now. Many houses were destroyed, many animals. People have no place to cook, to make things."

CALENDAR

All Dioceses

Meetings

■ **FRI, SEP. 25** — Last Friday Series: Catholic Leadership Forum; speaker, Sheriff Andrew Meloni; Genesee Valley Club, 421 East Ave., Rochester; 11:45 a.m.; call 716/328-3228, ext. 278 or 800/388-7177.

■ **TUE, SEP. 29** — "Listening: to the Voices of Young Catholic Women"; Church of the Resurrection, 63 Mason Rd., Fairport or St. Mary Church, 224 Franklin St., Elmira; 7-9 p.m.; call 716/328-3228 or 800/388-7177, ext. 342.

Religious Activities

■ **SEP. 29-OCT. 1** — Pilgrimage: St. Ann Parish; to three shrines: St. John Newman, PA; Padre Pio National Center, PA; Blue Army Shrine, NJ; \$139; 716/872-5096.

■ **OCT. 1** — Mass: feast of St. Therese; 9:30 a.m.; Monastery of Our Lady and St. Joseph, 1931 W. Jefferson Rd., Pittsford; Bishop Matthew Clark, celebrant.

Workshops

■ **OCT. 24** — Workshop: "In Unison & Harmony"; with John Bell, Iona Community, Scotland; St. Patrick's Church, 115 Maple St., Victor; also concert 7 p.m. Sat.; call 716/328-

3210 or 800/388-7177, ext. 328 or e-mail weinzler@dor.org.

Chemung Schuyler

Religious Activities

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Bible study: Luke-Acts; St. Anthony Church, W. Washington Ave. at N. Main St., Elmira; 8-week session; 7-8:30 p.m.; free.

■ **TUE, SEP. 29** — Police Mass: Sts. Peter and Paul Church, corner E. Market and High Sts., Elmira; 5:30 p.m. followed by free pasta supper.

Livingston County

Meetings

■ **TUE, SEP. 29** — Family seminar: on Caregiving for caregivers and older adults; St. Joseph/St. William Church, Hagerty Hall, 41 Spring St., Livonia; Tuesdays, Sept. 29-Nov. 3; 7-9 p.m.; 716/244-5190.

Monroe County

Fundraisers

■ **SAT, SEP. 26** — Street festival: Rogers House Restaurant, 271 Central Pk.,

Rochester; pancake breakfast 6:30-10:30 a.m.; lunch 10:30 a.m.-6 p.m.; 716/232-2749.

■ **SUN, SEP. 27** — Cabaret: Hope Hall benefit dinner; Phyl Contestable and Alan Jones; Dandrea's Restaurant & Party House, 1713 Lyell Ave., Rochester; 5 p.m.; 716/426-0210.

Meetings

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Forum: "An Interfaith Voyage to Israel"; The Dugan Center, St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place, Rochester; 12:10-12:50 p.m.

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Stress: management and mindfulness; SSJ Center, 402 Rogers Pky., Rochester; 7:30-9 p.m.; \$10.

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Registration deadline: for Oct. 5 Book of the Month Club; Mercy Prayer Center, 65 Highland Ave., Rochester; 716/473-6893.

■ **TUE, SEP. 29** — Lecture: "Hours with the Mystics"; SSJ Spirituality Center, 402 Rogers Pky., Rochester; 7-9 p.m.; 8 weeks; \$10 per session.

■ **TUE, SEP. 29** — Registration deadline: for Oct. 6 "Women Sharing A Woman's Journey"; monthly; Mercy Prayer Center, 65 Highland Ave., Rochester; 716/473-6893.

■ **THU, OCT. 1** — Meeting: "Abortion and Healing: Is It Possible?"; Dugan Center, St. Mary's Church; 15 St. Mary's Place, Rochester; 7:30 p.m.; call Pam 716/671-4980 or Bill 716/232-7140.

Religious Activities

■ **SUN, SEP. 27** — Mass: celebrating 150th anniversary of Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph's Church, 210 Pleasant St., Rochester; celebrant, Bishop Matthew Clark; 11 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.; reception.

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Prayer service: for victims of violence; Holy Family Church, Jay and Ames Sts., Rochester; 7 p.m.

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Faith sharing: women in 12-step programs; Borromeo Prayer Center, 3011 Dewey Ave., Rochester; 7-8:30 p.m.; 716/663-5856.

■ **FRI, OCT. 2** — Talk: by Ivan Dragicevic, Medjugorje visionary; Holy Family Parish, Fulton; call 716/593-3225.

Social Activities

■ **SEP. 25-26** — 55th Reunion: Aquinas Class of 1943; call 716/663-1037 or 716/865-8783.

Seneca Cayuga

Fundraisers

■ **SAT, SEP. 26** — Golf ball drop: Silver Creek Golf Course's Driving Range, E. River St., Waterloo; 11 a.m.; to benefit St. Mary's School, Waterloo; call Kathy 315/539-8589 or 315/539-0153.

Steuben County

Religious Activities

■ **SAT, SEP. 26** — Mass: Catholic Daughters of the Americas; celebrant, Bishop Matthew Clark; St. Vincent de Paul Church, 222 Dodge Ave., Corning; noon.

■ **WED, SEP. 30** — Registration deadline: for Oct. 4 "Discovering God in Everyday Life"; St. Gabriel's Parish Center, 78 Shethar St., Hammond-sport; call 716/235-4068, e-mail praytoo@juno.com.

Yates Ontario Wayne

Health

■ **MON, SEP. 28** — Application deadline: for Operation Rice Bowl funding; call Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, 315/789-2686.

Religious Activities

■ **TUE, SEP. 27-29** — Triduum: feast of St. Michael the Archangel; St. Michael Church, 401 S. Main St., Newark; prayers Sep. 27, 29, Mass Sep. 29, all 7:30 p.m.