

WORLD & NATION

Gathering highlights 'Jubilee Justice' issues

By Nancy Frazier O'Brien
Catholic News Service

LOS ANGELES — Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles sent some 3,000 social justice workers home July 18 with a mandate to weed out violence, hatred, racism and economic disparities in their own communities.

The cardinal was celebrant and homilist for the July 18 Mass that closed the four-day National Catholic Gathering for Jubilee Justice on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles.

"The illusion that power, pleasure and material consumption can satisfy the human heart leaves so many without the religious roots, moral direction, family ties and the love that gives life true meaning," he said.

Along with violence, racism and other problems, "these are the weeds that choke our efforts; overshadow our values, and shatter the human family," he added.

The Mass at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion also included prayers "for those who wait for John Kennedy Jr. and his wife, Carolyn." The night before, participants in the jubilee justice meeting joined in a moment of silent prayer for the Kennedy couple and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy's sister, Lauren Bessette.

The three were in a private plane piloted by Kennedy that disappeared the night of July 16, apparently in the waters near Martha's Vineyard, Mass. They were presumed dead late on July 18 after a search turned up little more than bits of debris that could have come from the plane.

Like the liturgy that opened the justice gathering, the July 18 Mass highlighted the various cultures, languages and races in the church. A Native American man and an Asian-American woman did the readings, and musical selections were in Latin, Spanish, English and Vietnamese.

In his homily, Cardinal Mahony said

Catholics were called to "build a culture of life and love to replace the violence, division and emptiness that diminishes so many lives."

"We believe every person is precious, no matter how young or how old, how rich or how poor; regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or immigration status; whether they are in Kosovo, East Los Angeles, or even on death row," he added.

"In this new millennium, we must act in solidarity, insisting that the hungry, dispossessed and the victims of ethnic cleansing, land mines and war are not problems — but our sisters and brothers, members of our one human family," he added.

Earlier in the day, participants took a "jubilee pledge for charity, justice and peace in the new millennium," which included promises to "reach across boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity, gender and disabling conditions" and to "live justly in family life, school, work, the marketplace, and the political arena."

Father Bryan N. Massingale, assistant professor of moral theology at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, told the justice workers that they must reverse the "disturbing reality" of the "permissible victims" in our society, due first and foremost to a pervasive racism.

"The most important reason for the existence of permissible victims in American society is racism," he said.

No matter what specific ministry people are involved in, whether it is pro-life, farm labor, immigration, or prison ministry, "you cannot engage in that ministry without running into a brick wall of racism," Father Massingale said.

But racism and other problems cannot be ended just by telling the poor, women or African-Americans to "get over it," he said. "We will never be reconciled and healed by telling each other to 'get over it.'"

Describing the massacre of Native



Victor Aleman/CNS

Cardinals and bishops celebrated the opening Mass of the jubilee justice gathering in Los Angeles July 15. More than 3,000 social justice workers took part in the four-day event.

Americans in this country's early years as "an American instance of ethnic cleansing which has not been properly named," Father Massingale said "the past is not past, and it will not let us go until we face it."

In another July 18 talk urging action, Bishop Diarmud Martin, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the Vatican, said the Catholic Church has made a significant contribution to discussions about international debt relief, but more needs to be done.

Calling the current situation "unsustainable," he said a "rapid solution is in the best interests of all."

"Half-measures are no longer of any help," Bishop Martin added.

Barbara Kohnen, a policy adviser for the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Social Development and World

Peace, tried to put the debt relief question into simpler terms by asking the audience whether they owned a business or had a mortgage or credit cards.

"So you know what it's like to be in debt," she said when most people raised their hands. "Imagine being in debt but you can't declare bankruptcy. You have to keep borrowing to pay the interest. You have to close your business, sell your assets. You might have to take your children out of school in order for them to work."

That's the situation that faces many Third World nations on a larger scale, such as in Mozambique, which spends two times as much on debt as on education, Kohnen said.

She urged Catholics to contact their representatives in Congress in support of H.R. 1095, the Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction Act of 1999.

Rare 'Jesus' coins discovered among artifacts in Tiberias

By Judith Sudilovsky
Catholic News Service

JERUSALEM — Recent cleaning of a horde of 10th-century coins discovered last year in Tiberias have revealed 60 rare "Jesus coins" bearing an image of Christ.

Coins of this type, known as "anonymous folles" because they neither contain the name or image of the ruler of the time, were minted briefly for 80 years at the end of the 10th century by Christian kings in Constantinople, said Hebrew University Archaeology Professor Yizhar Hirschfeld, who led the dig at the site of ancient Tiberias.

The coins, along with some 20 additional coins and another 1,000 bronze items from the Islamic period, were among the largest cache of objects from that period ever discovered in Israel. Although uncovered last year, it was not until the cleaning of the coins began this year that archaeologists realized the magnitude of their find.

The coins are engraved with an image of Jesus and with Greek inscriptions proclaiming "Jesus the Messiah, the King of Kings" and "Jesus, the Messiah, the Victor," Hirschfeld said.

"You can see Jesus very clearly on the coins. There is a big cross behind him, and he has a big head and eyes like on the icons of the fifth century," Hirschfeld said. "These are very rare coins, and it is the first time they were found in Israel."

He said the largest collection of such coins is housed at the Dunbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies in Washing-

ton, D.C. The coins found at the Tiberias dig are now on display in a new "House of Bronze" exhibit at the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology.

Hirschfeld said the "Jesus coins" were minted as a form of propaganda by the Christian kings at the end of the last millennium in response to Islam.

Although they were not of high monetary value — valuable coins were made of gold — the Jesus coins seem to have had a special significance similar to that of a religious medallion for Christian pilgrims.

The items were found in clay pots hidden under the floor of a structure, apparently where the building owner had hidden the metal objects and coins out of fear of invasion by the Crusaders.

The Crusaders invaded and destroyed Tiberias, which at the time had a mixed population of Jews, Muslims and Christians. The coins and bronze items remained well concealed in their hiding place and were not plundered by the attacking forces.

"These coins show that the owner was possibly a Christian and if not, then that he had contact with the Christian population of Tiberias. This find also demonstrates that there were Christians in Tiberias at that time and that pilgrims from Constantinople came to Tiberias — otherwise we would not have these coins here," Hirschfeld said. "It is nice at the end of the second millennium to find these coins in the same place they were hidden by the unknown owner at the end of the last millennium."

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