

WORLD & NATION

Church begins inquiry of Mother Teresa's life

CALCUTTA — The formal start of the church's inquiry into the life of Mother Teresa began July 26.

Archbishop Henry D'Souza led the opening session of the process that could lead to Mother Teresa's beatification and canonization.

Further information was unavailable by the *Catholic Courier's* deadline.

Pope appeals sentence

WASHINGTON — Pope John Paul II's representative in the United States has appealed to the governor of Alabama for clemency for a convicted murderer whose execution is scheduled for Aug. 6.

Victor Kennedy was convicted of brutally killing an 86-year-old woman during a 1980 burglary.

Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo wrote the letter on the pope's behalf.

Music, prayer fills Kennedy Mass

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Rather than recall the tragic circumstances of the deaths of John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife and sister-in-law, Washington mourners July 25 celebrated the lives of three individuals "endowed with immortal souls ... called to share the life and love of God."

A standing-room-only crowd of almost 5,000 people from all over the Washington area filled the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to pay their final respects during a memorial Mass for the son of the 35th president, his wife, Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and her sister Lauren Bessette.

The three were killed when their plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Martha's Vineyard, Mass., July 16.

"We gather this day in both sorrow and hope, because we want them, and all our beloved dead, to share something greater than the blessings this world affords. With the wisdom of Solomon, we do not reproach God for withholding from them the blessings of a long life," Washington



Mike Merger/Photo Intern
Jill Smith and her mother, Debbie, add their signatures to the hundreds inscribed in a John F. Kennedy Jr. memorial book in the Monroe County Office Building July 22.

Auxiliary Bishop William E. Lori told the congregation during his homily.

"Instead, we come before the Lord in humble supplication, asking for them something greater than the length of days. We are asking God to grant them not merely a long life but eternal life in

his kingdom."

The music-filled Mass was celebrated by Bishop Lori; Msgr. Michael Bransfield, the shrine's rector; and several visiting priests in town for a conference at The Catholic University of America.

Bishop Lori called John Kennedy Jr. "a symbol of a generation" who didn't overlook the less fortunate, as evidenced by his association with charities like Reaching Up, an organization that cares for the mentally handicapped, and the Robin Hood Foundation, a group providing funds for impoverished children in New York City.

"In the face of their short lives and their tragic deaths, our nation mourns its loss," the bishop said. "But we do an injustice to John, Carolyn and Lauren and their grieving families if we regard these young people merely as cultural icons, as symbols of a fantastic life. They were more than images. They were persons, human beings, created in the image and likeness of God."

China

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sect had 39 branches nationwide. It claims 100 million adherents inside and outside China.

Li, through the U.S.-based Falun Gong Web site, denied that the movement is anti-government, calling it "simply a popular qigong activity" that helps people "become good people."

By July 26, some 5,000 Falun Gong leaders in China reportedly were arrested.

In Hong Kong, Anthony Lam Sui-ki, executive secretary of the Holy Spirit Study Center, which does research on the Chinese church, told UCA News July 23

that China's media had recently distinguished between superstition and religion.

This shows that Communist Party of China officials wanted to "avoid touching the religious policy" and minimize the effect of the Falun Gong crackdown on government-recognized religions.

However, some officials insist on atheism, categorize religion and superstition together and may use any opportunity to tighten religious policy, Lam noted, adding that the policy against the underground church has been long-term.

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 a number of government-approved bishops are said to have secretly reconciled with the Vatican.

Precious Blood Sister Beatrice Leung Kit-fun, assistant professor of politics and sociology lecturer at Hong Kong Lingnan College, said Beijing may tighten its religious policy as the Falun Gong incident had revealed problems at the grassroots level.

She said the Communist Party, which rules China through political means and controls people's ideology, could not bear to see its ideology challenged and replaced.

A Catholic source told UCA News July

23 that Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding, unaffiliated with the open church, was recently warned not to contact people from outside China.

One priest said he warned Catholics that Falun Gong's "rapid expansion in just a few years is abnormal."

Government-recognized Bishop Paul Jiang Taoran of Shijiazhuang, Hebei, said the church in general would not promote qigong but admitted that individual Catholics may practice qigong as a health exercise.

Other clerics said they only heard about Falun Gong after some 10,000 adherents protested April 25 in front of Zhongnanhai, the seat of the central government in Beijing, against the government's treatment of the movement.

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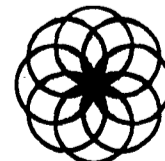
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