

WORLD & NATION

Quake kills hundreds in Turkey

By Lynne Weil
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II sent his condolences after an earthquake in Turkey killed hundreds of people and injured thousands.

An Aug. 17 telegram in the pope's name signed by the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, said the pontiff was "deeply saddened by the news of the heavy loss of life and injury" caused by the previous day's quake.

Pope John Paul was praying for those who were hurt or killed, the message said, and wanted to offer the victims' families the solace of his spiritual closeness to them.

Cardinal Sodano said he joined the pope in praying for the "gifts of courage and strength (to) all who are grieving."

The earthquake in northwestern Turkey struck at 3 a.m. local time Aug. 16, rocking some of the country's biggest cities and collapsing buildings with occupants asleep inside.

An estimated 800 people were killed, with the death toll expected to rise, state-run television reported Aug. 17, and at least 2,500 were injured. Hospitals were said to be overwhelmed.

Casualty reports were heaviest near the industrial city of Izmit, where an oil refinery burst into flame, about 55 miles east of Turkey's largest city of Istanbul, in which some 40 people were killed.

Local authorities in the earthquake-hit areas appealed for rescue equipment, food and volunteers to dig out the victims.

Experts in the United States monitoring earthquakes worldwide placed the magnitude of this one at 7.8 on the Richter Scale.

A 6.3 magnitude quake in southern Turkey in 1998 killed 144 people and injured more than 1,500.



A man searches for survivors in the rubble of a collapsed apartment building in Istanbul Aug. 17. A strong earthquake shook the region in early morning hours killing hundreds of people.

Pro-lifers repudiate abortion/crime link

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A study suggesting that the legalization of abortion in 1973 is the main cause for a crime rate drop in the 1990s is prompting outrage among pro-life leaders.

"This is absolutely the most insidious rational I have ever heard of for tolerating abortion," said Joseph Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League, of the unpublished research paper, "Legalized Abortion and Crime."

Gail Quinn, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-life Activities, called the study's conclusions "insulting" and said they were based on "tentative assumptions" rather than solid scholarship.

The study by Steven D. Levitt, professor of economics at the University of Chicago, and John J. Donohue III, a professor at Stanford University Law School, was made available to Catholic News Service in mid-August.

Cardinal: Use beliefs to transform business

WASHINGTON (CNS) — American Catholics should use their faith to transform business and politics, factories and offices, homes and schools.

In an annual statement issued by the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Domestic Policy Committee for Labor Day, which this year is Sept. 6, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony said Catholics are called to examine economic relationships through the lens of Catholic social teachings.

"The church asks Catholics to think about public policy proposals not only from the perspective of their individual or family self-interest, but also from the perspective of average and low-wage workers and their families," he said in the statement.

Deaths climb in battles

AMBON, Indonesia (CNS) — Clashes between Muslim and Christian mobs reportedly left more than 100 people dead in Ambon, capital of Indonesia's Maluku province, in mid-August.

A dozen people were reportedly killed in overnight battles Aug. 13 and 14. Army troops were deployed to quell the groups — which were armed with swords, spears and bows and arrows.

More than 400 deaths have been attributed to such battles since the start of the year.

Study: Catholic schools boast waiting lists

WASHINGTON (CNS) — During the 1998-99 school year, 36 Catholic schools opened, according to a study by the National Catholic Educational Association.

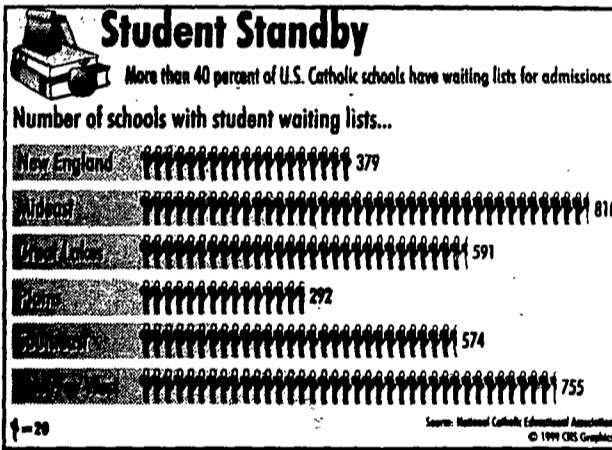
The study, titled "United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 1998-1999," is loaded with other statistics, including total Catholic school enrollment, which now stands at 2,648,844 for 8,217 Catholic schools nationwide.

Catholic school enrollment has remained stable over the past year and overall enrollment has increased by 81,000 students during the past six years.

Within elementary schools, preschool admission is up 5.7 percent. In high schools, enrollment has increased by nearly 2,000.

A fixture at Catholic schools seems to be the waiting list for admission — 41 percent of Catholic schools have such a list. They exist in most suburban schools. And where diocesan and privately funded scholarship support is available in inner-city schools, there are long waiting lists for lottery-like selection.

"These statistics remind me of the soaring stock market. It's a great story reflecting unprecedented growth and confidence in the system," said NCEA president Leonard DeFiore.



"Like the flip side of the bull market, the good news isn't reaching out to everyone — in our case the thousands of families who are on waiting lists for admission and the

thousands more for whom Catholic schools are unattainable due to economic limitations."

DeFiore said the greatest challenge for the future is "working for a just educational system in this country."

"Our waiting lists and new schools are a sensational statement about parents' motivation to choose schools," he said. "But what about the millions of other parents who have the will of financing their school

but no way of choice?"

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