

WORLD & NATION

Relief efforts mount in devastated Turkey

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As the death toll mounted with tens of thousands feared dead from the earthquake in northwestern Turkey, Pope John Paul II repeated his solace to the victims and their families.

U.S. church officials also expressed their condolences and urged Catholics to pray for and send aid to victims of the quake.

During his noon prayer Aug. 22 at his summer villa in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, Pope John Paul said, "The news that continues to emerge (from Turkey) describes a situation that goes beyond the contours of a catastrophe."

The pope, whose remarks were published at the Vatican that day, said he was following events in Turkey "with constant apprehension and profound feeling for these brothers and sisters who have been tried so terribly."

He expressed his condolences for those who died and prayed that God would show them mercy.

The pope also prayed that the suffering of those who had lost houses and property might be alleviated.

He concluded by praying for those who were coordinating and undertaking relief operations, from state authorities to soldiers to volunteers. All were enduring "great pain," the pope said, amid comforting and helping others.

The Aug. 17 earthquake, measuring 7.4 on the Richter scale, occurred about at 3 a.m. local time, rocking some of Turkey's biggest cities and collapsing buildings with occupants asleep inside, hitting hardest in a belt of industrial cities east of Istanbul.

Local officials said Aug. 23 that more than 12,000 people were killed, 33,000 injured. A senior U.N. disaster relief official said Turkish authorities requested help in obtaining 45,000 body bags, because they feared the death toll could rise dramatically.

Some 200,000 survivors were being housed in tents at sites lacking basic facilities.

Izmir, about 400 miles from the quake's epicenter, also felt the powerful first shock.

Archbishop Giuseppe Bernardini of Izmir told the Italian Catholic daily *Avvenire*



Reuters/CNS

Four days following the Aug. 17 earthquake, residents of Golcuk, Turkey, continue to search through debris of destroyed homes for survivors and victims.

that the situation in the earthquake-hit region was "desperate."

"The needs of the population are enormous. Who could ever count all those who have been made homeless?" he said.

Catholic Relief Services, the Baltimore-based overseas relief and development agency of the U.S. church, said it would work with local Catholic partner organizations to provide water, food and shelter.

A statement from Kenneth F. Hackett, CRS executive director, said water distribution seemed to be the most urgent need in the northwestern region most affected by the earthquake. Sanitation, shelter and health needs would also be immediate priorities, he said.

Bishop Edward J. O'Donnell of Lafayette, La., asked that special collections be taken up at weekend Masses Aug. 21-22, with the total forwarded to CRS. Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark, N.J., announced he had authorized an emergency collection to be taken up at all

parishes to assist in relief services.

In Philadelphia, Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua asked Catholics to pray for the victims, the survivors and their families and those "who are still missing," and he pledged the archdiocese's support "to the people of Turkey."

"The immensity of this tragedy grows every day," he said.

In New York, the Catholic Medical Mission Board announced Aug. 23 it had committed an initial \$35,000 in emergency response funds as part of a joint effort with Caritas Internationalis donors worldwide that totaled more than \$1 million.

CMMB will continue working closely with its Caritas partners in Turkey and "is prepared to send medicines and medical supplies as on-site emergency teams request," the announcement said.

"High temperatures combined with garbage, corpses and sewage waste have compounded the risk of typhoid, cholera and other infectious diseases," it said.

Who to contact?

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Medical Mission Board are among agencies collecting donations for victims of the Aug. 17 Turkish earthquake. Donations may be sent to the following addresses:

• Catholic Relief Services, marked "Turkish Earthquake," to P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, MD, 21203-7090.

Contributions also may be made by credit card by calling (800) 736-3467, or by accessing on the agency's Web site: www.catholicrelief.org.

• Catholic Medical Mission Board, marked "Earthquake Relief," to 10 W. 17th St., New York, NY, 10011-5765. Contributions also may be made by credit card by calling (800) 678-5659, or through the CMMB Web site: www.cmmb.org.

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