



Israel president optimistic about talks

JERUSALEM (CNS) — Religious leaders have an important role to play in the establishment of peace in the Middle East, said Israeli President Ezer Weizman at his annual New Year reception for Christian leaders.

"The differences which exist today will disappear," he said. "I am sure all churches of all denominations and all religions have an important part to play."

With the entrance of Syria into peace talks with Israel, he said, past prejudices and hatreds will diminish and Muslims, Christians and Jews will be "more tolerant and understand each other better."

He also noted that he has listened with concern to Christian leaders who have spoken to him about Christian-Muslim tensions in Nazareth and said he hoped the situation in that city was "a little bit bet-

ter."

A long-brewing controversy in Nazareth over the construction of a mosque adjacent to the Basilica of the Annunciation has led to clashes between Christians and Muslims.

At the president's reception, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Timothy delivered the remarks of Greek Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros, the most senior Orthodox patriarch in the Holy Land.

"From the Holy Land emanates the message of reconciliation between man and almighty God," said Metropolitan Timothy. "And this land and its inhabitants deserve more than anybody else reconciliation. Our Christian community focuses especially on the continuity of the peace process ... between the Palestinians and the Israelis, thus securing the safety of people

and providing equal human rights."

Religious fanaticism and intolerance should not be tolerated, he said, and the problems created by fanatic forces should be dealt with in "seriousness and with great courage" in order to solve these "perplexing problems."

He also congratulated the Israeli government for its December formation of an interministerial committee, to be headed by Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Haim Ramon, to deal with issues concerning the Christian churches.

Uri Mor, director of Christian affairs at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, told journalists the committee was formed following the crisis in Nazareth.

Minister of Internal Security Shlomo Ben Ami, who was present at the presi-

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Pope defines limits of intervention

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II's teaching on the very selective use of military force has earned him the reputation as a bit of a dreamer.

Over the years, he has repeatedly underscored the principle of "humanitarian intervention" in world trouble spots, yet he rarely seems satisfied when the international community applies it.

Eight years ago, the pope baffled many Catholics, especially Westerners, with his insistent appeals against military strikes on Iraq. In the eyes of many analysts, the Gulf War seemed a textbook application of traditional just-war theory.

More recently, the pope used still stronger language against NATO's bombing campaign on Yugoslavia, despite the alliance's unassailable goal of preventing continuing human rights atrocities.

Hoping to solve the paradox, commentators pored over the pope's annual peace message in mid-December, in which he devotes a full page to the issue of "humanitarian intervention."

Bishop Diarmuid Martin, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, called the message the most articulate treatment of the issue to date.

But while shedding light on how to put the principle in practice, the pope's words also raise new questions.

"The message is throwing a ball into play," explained Jesuit Father Joseph Joblin, professor of political ethics at Rome's Gregorian University and internationally noted "humanitarian intervention" theorist.

"It obliges people to reflect anew, to search for solutions which don't yet exist," he said.

In the text, the pope says international force is sometimes necessary "when a civilian population risks being overcome by the at-



Vatican/CNS

Pope John Paul II stands at the window of his balcony as fireworks explode in Rome at the start of the third millennium Jan. 1. The pontiff welcomed the new year with a wish that 2000 be filled with joy and peace.

Excerpts of the pope's annual peace message are on Page 10.

tacks of an unjust aggressor and political efforts and non-violent defense prove to be of no avail."

But, he says, measures taken to "disarm the aggressor" must be:

- Limited in time and precise in their aims.

- Carried out "in full respect for international law, guaranteed by an authority that is internationally recognized."

- Never left to the outcome of armed intervention alone.

At the heart of the justification for the use of force, the pope said, is the "pre-eminent value of humanitarian law and the consequent duty to guarantee the right to humanitarian aid to suffering civilians and refugees."

Humanitarian concerns trump claims of national sovereignty and the right of non-interference in a country's internal affairs, the pope said, because "the good of the human person comes before all else and stands above all human institutions."

Putting the seemingly straightforward principle into practice, however, is another matter. Though the Vatican endorsed the 1992 U.S.-led multinational force into Somalia to protect relief supplies from warring clans, it was among the sharpest critics when the intervention force fired on Somali civilians.

Another difficulty is determining in which cases the

principle applies. The U.N. armed intervention in Bosnia, ostensibly a humanitarian mission to prevent genocide, was not so much a "humanitarian intervention" as a "military intervention with humanitarian aims," said Father Joblin.

Less elusive, however, is the pope's insistence that such military interventions must take place under the auspices of the United Nations. This was the source of the Vatican's "serious reservations, to say the least," about NATO's foray in Kosovo, Father Joblin said.

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