

WORLD & NATION

Pope plans itinerary for biblical pilgrimage

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — With the mid-January announcement of papal trips to Egypt and the Holy Land, Pope John Paul II's long-desired biblical pilgrimage was finally taking shape.

Last summer, the pope described his dream of walking in the footsteps of the patriarchs, the apostles and Jesus during the jubilee year that marks the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's birth.

"The church cannot forget her roots," he explained, saying he wanted to return to the origins of the faith.

Six months later, the Vatican has announced trips to the Holy Land, March 20-26, and Egypt, Feb. 24-26, that will take the 79-year-old pontiff to some of Christianity's most sacred places — from Mount Sinai to the Sea of Galilee.

The visits also represent an unprecedented interreligious journey to the Middle East, a region where Muslims, Jews and Christians have often struggled to live in harmony.

The pope wanted to start his Holy Year pilgrimage in southern Iraq, where the biblical patriarch Abraham was born. But after months of talks, Iraq — blaming the West — announced last December that it could not host the pope for security reasons.

Vatican officials said it was a major disappointment for the pope, but they still hoped the trip could be salvaged at a later date. Meanwhile, papal aides worked hard to assemble a pilgrimage route in Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. After weeks of delicate negotiations, the green light was given by all sides.

In Egypt, the pope will pray at the foot of Mount Sinai, called Mount Horeb in the Bible, where Moses received the Ten Commandments and was called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The pope will visit the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Catherine, built on the traditional site of the "burning bush," in which God revealed his presence to Moses.

St. Catherine of Alexandria is said to have been a virgin martyr, and the monastery built in her honor in the sixth century became a famous pilgrimage shrine.

The pope's first two days in Egypt will be spent in Cairo, where he will be greeted at the airport by President Hosni

Mubarak. After meeting Pope Shenouda III, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the pope will be received at the residence of one of Islam's most important leaders, Grand Sheik Mohammed Sayyid Tantawi.

Father Justo Lacunza, who teaches at the Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies in Rome, told Vatican Radio that Sheik Tantawi and al-Azhar University which he heads represent Islamic orthodoxy and "the right way" for most of the world's Muslims. He said the pope's visit "surely has a fundamental importance for the future relations between the Christian church and the Islamic world."

Leaders of Egypt's small Catholic community also said the pope's visit bodes well for ecumenical and Christian-Muslim relations.

Father Ibrahim Isak Sedrach told the Vatican missionary news agency, Fides, "This is a historic event: a Muslim country where Christians are mostly Orthodox will welcome a Catholic pope. For our youngsters it will be a joy and an encouragement."

Father Sedrach is rector at St. Leo the Great Seminary in Cairo, where the pope will hold an ecumenical encounter, an event that will underline the good relations between the approximately 200,000 Egyptian Catholics and the 6 million Coptic Orthodox faithful.

Patriarch Stephanos II Ghattas, head of the Catholic Coptic community in Egypt, said that despite sporadic violence by Islamic extremists, he thought the welcome given the pope by Egypt's Muslim majority would be "beautiful and spontaneous." He added that the Mass in Cairo would be celebrated inside, however, because some Muslims might be sensitive to the idea of a popular welcome for the pope.

The pope's visit to the Holy Land begins in Jordan March 20, where the pope will visit the monastery of Mount Nebo, the mountain from which Moses looked upon the promised land of Canaan after leading the Israelite tribes to safety.

The pope will celebrate Mass in the Jordanian capital of Amman and meet with King Abdullah II. He tentatively is scheduled to say Mass near the Jordan River, where Christ was baptized.

After arriving in Jerusalem March 21, the pope will visit Bethlehem the next day, celebrating Mass near the spot held by tradition as the place of Christ's birth. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will at-

tend and later escort the pontiff on a visit to a Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Bethlehem.

The pope will spend the next few days visiting places sacred to all three monotheistic religions. In Jerusalem, he will celebrate Masses at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Cenacle, or Hall of the Last Supper; stop at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and meet with Jewish religious authorities at the Western Wall, or Wailing Wall, the place most venerated by Jews; and meet with Muslim representatives at the al-Aqsa Mosque, the ancient center of Muslim worship.

The pope will visit sites around the Sea of Galilee March 24 and celebrate Mass

for some 50,000 young people near the place where Christ gave his Sermon on the Mount, the Mount of Beatitudes.

On March 25, he will travel to Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, to celebrate Mass at the Basilica of the Annunciation, where Mary is said to have received the news that she was to bear Jesus. The city became a site of controversy last year when a group of Muslims announced plans to build a mosque next to the church.

The pope's schedule also calls for a meeting with Christian leaders in Jerusalem and a possible visit to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ prayed and was arrested the night before his crucifixion.



Bill Wittman/CNS

'Behold this child'

A church window depicts the presentation of the Lord, the ceremony in which Christ was brought to the temple and Mary was purified after his birth. The feast of the Presentation is Feb. 2.

Fire leaves Seton Hall in grief

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J. (CNS) — Seton Hall University suspended classes for nearly a week as students and faculty mourned the death of three freshmen killed in an early morning dormitory fire Jan. 19.

Fifty-eight students, two firefighters and two police officers were treated for burns or smoke inhalation at area hospitals. Four remained hospitalized in critical condition with serious burns Jan. 24.

Killed in the blaze were Aaron C. Karol of Green Brook, Frank S. Caltabillota of Long Branch and John N. Giunta of Vineland.

All three were 18 years old and residents of Boland Hall, a six-story residence housing 600 students, where the fire broke out in the third-floor lounge area about 4:30 a.m.

Seton Hall is the Newark archdiocesan university with about 10,000 students.

"This is a heartbreaking tragedy for Seton Hall University, for our families, for all the Seton Hall family," said Msgr. Robert T. Sheeran, university president, at a press conference only hours after the fire.

"Words cannot express what's happening to us," he added.

Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark said, "There's not much you can say at this time. We're glad we're people

of faith."

Later Msgr. Sheeran said he and the archbishop went into Boland Hall after the fire was put out and prayed over the three bodies and blessed them. He called Jan. 19 "the most painful day in Seton Hall's history."

Students and faculty packed Immaculate Conception Chapel on campus for a prayer service the evening following the fire.

Hundreds more stood outside in the cold, praying silently until a young priest mounted the chapel steps and led the rosary. After the service inside, Archbishop McCarrick and Msgr. Sheeran came out and spoke to those outdoors.

The fire occurred just six days after students returned from their winter break.

Essex County Prosecutor Don Campo said the South Orange fire department responded to a fire alarm at 4:30 a.m. and contained the fire in the building's third-floor common area, but "smoke and heat traveled throughout that floor."

University officials initially scheduled a memorial service in Walsh Gymnasium Jan. 25.

The 10 a.m. memorial service on campus was to be followed by a community luncheon for all and faculty meetings for every school and college in the early afternoon. Classes were then to resume.

The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, grant, we beseech Thee through the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin and all the saints, an increase of laborers for Thy Church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls through the same Jesus Christ Thy Son Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the union of the Holy Spirit world without end. Amen

Imprimatur: Most Rev. James E. Kearney

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

February, 2000

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
	Revs.	Edward B. Zenkel	Ronald A. Antinorelli	Richard J. Belgotti	Robert C. Bradler	Bishop Matthew H. Clark
	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pope John Paul II	Sabbatical Priests	Thomas W. Burr	Peter C. Clifford	Patrick L. Connor	Peter M. DeBellis	Douglas D. DellaPietra
	13	14	15	16	17	18
William G. Endres	Raymond H. Fleming	John J. Glogowski	Joseph A. Hart	P. Frederick Helfrich	Timothy E. Horan	Winfried M. Kellner
	20	21	22	23	24	25
William B. Leone	Michael J. Mahler	Joseph P. McCaffrey	William A. Moorby	George R. Norton	George Okoff	Walter Plominski
	27	28	29	Look for the March MPRP Calendar in the February 24th Courier.		
Robert P. Ring	Vocations	Seminarians				

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