

WORLD & NATION

Apology

Continued from page 1

gravated ecumenical divisions, increased discrimination against minority and ethnic groups, "humiliated and marginalized" women, and shown contempt for local cultures and religious traditions.

The pope called for "genuine brotherhood" between Christians and Jews, telling Jewish people that "we are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer."

At the conclusion of the apology liturgy, the pope embraced and kissed the crucifix and, in a final blessing, declared that "never again" should such sins be committed. Thousands of people attended the service, packing the basilica and watching on giant-screen TV in the square outside.

Commentators inside and outside the church hailed the event as a historic step, and the pope was described by one Italian newspaper as a "voice in the wilderness" for his willingness to publicly ask forgiveness.

Jewish leaders also praised the pope, but some said he should have been more specific about the Holocaust. In Israel, where the pope was to visit later in the month, Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau welcomed the pope's words but said the church needs to apologize for Pope Pius XII's actions during World War II. Many Jews think the wartime pope did not speak out strongly enough against Nazi persecution of Jews.

In New York, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith said that in failing to specifically mention the Holocaust, the pope had "missed a historic opportunity to bring closure" to Christian responsibility for sins against Jews.

In the United States, local bishops took their cue from the pope and conducted Lenten services with public apologies for church actions against Jews, women, na-

tive peoples and other groups:

• In a Lenten message, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony asked forgiveness for any of his own actions or those of the archdiocese and its Catholics that have offended or hurt others. He made specific apologies to Jews, Muslims, women, ethnic and cultural minorities, organized labor, victims of clergy sex abuse, divorced and remarried Catholics and women religious. To gay and lesbian Catholics he apologized for "when the church has appeared to be non-supportive of their struggles."

• Boston Cardinal Bernard F. Law led a prayer service March 12 asking forgiveness for the faults of local Catholics throughout history, specifically regarding slavery, racism, anti-Semitism, sex abuse by priests and the treatment of women.

• Bishop John S. Cummins of Oakland, Calif., invited survivors of clergy sexual abuse to a March 25 service of apology and reconciliation.

• Bishop Joseph L. Imesch of Joliet, Ill., presided over an atonement service, apologizing for the sins of church leaders. Those attending were asked to express their own forgiveness by writing down names or situations of sin involving the church; the forms were then ritually burned, symbolizing atonement.

Similar services were held in Norwich, Conn., and Santa Fe, N.M., and other dioceses.

In Australia, bishops asked forgiveness for their failures in dealing with such issues as church unity, care for aborigines and sex abuse. Swiss bishops acknowledged that Catholics did too little to prevent persecution of Jews by Nazis.

Vatican officials emphasized that the church's apology was not a political but a religious act, addressed first of all to God. On March 7, they presented a 19,000-word document titled "Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past," which examined several difficult theological questions and tried to eliminate some misperceptions about the apology movement.

The church's "mea culpa" cannot be seen as a form of "self-flagellation" performed in public for the benefit of others, said French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Vatican's jubilee committee.

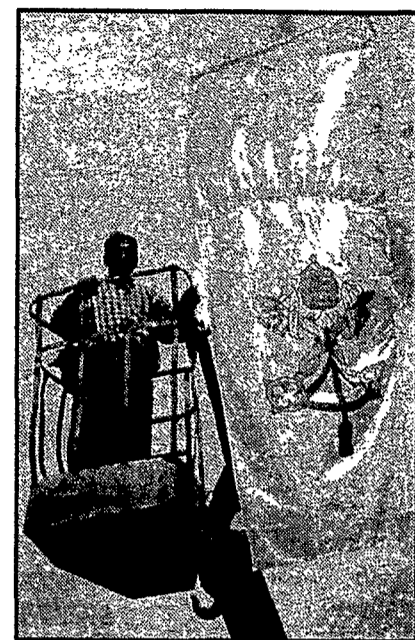
Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the International Theological Commission, which prepared the document, said the church was not setting itself up as a tribunal to judge the actions of past Christians. The aim was to "know ourselves and open ourselves to the purification of memories and to our true renewal," he said.

The document said the church was holy and cannot sin, but that its members have sinned through the ages. Acknowledging these faults can foster renewal and reconciliation in the present, it said.

The document rejected any notion of collective guilt by Christians, however, saying that would be as unfair as blaming all Jews for Christ's death.

"Sin is ... always personal, even though it wounds the entire church," it said.

The church officials also said that the pope's unprecedented gesture of confessing past sins could set a precedent — today's Christians and church leaders can also expect to have their actions closely judged.



Debbie Hill/CNS

Flying high

A municipal worker hangs the Vatican flag over a street in Jerusalem as the city prepares for the visit of Pope John Paul II. The pope starts his weeklong pilgrimage to the Holy Land March 20 in Jordan.

"What will the men and women of tomorrow think of us?" asked Dominican Father Georges Cottier, the pope's personal theologian.

"We are no better than the men and women of the past. It is with modesty and fear and trembling that we must judge their acts," he said.

Pope sets date for Drexel canonization

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II fixed an October date to canonize Blessed Katharine Drexel, the U.S. heiress who dedicated her life to defending and educating African-Americans and Native Americans.

During a March 10 meeting with cardinals and bishops who reside near the Vatican, the pope said he would declare Blessed Katharine a saint during an Oct. 1 Mass at St. Peter's Basilica.

The meeting, in which the prelates voted to proceed with the declaration of sainthood, marked the last procedural re-

quirement before the canonization ceremony.

The final approval in Blessed Katharine's cause was one of nearly 150 decided at the March 10 meeting.

Among the others were 120 martyrs killed in China, including six bishops and 25 priests. Like Blessed Drexel, they were to be canonized Oct. 1 at the Vatican, along with a Spanish nun who died in 1912.

Greeting pilgrims from the Philadelphia Archdiocese led by Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua March 11, the pope said

he commended them to Blessed Katharine, "whom I will shortly have the honor of canonizing."

The cause of Blessed Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun who inspired the Divine Mercy devotion, also received final approval. Her canonization ceremony at St. Peter's Basilica was set for April 30, Mercy Sunday.

Final approval was also given for the sainthood causes of 25 Mexican martyrs and a Mexican priest and nun. They were to be declared saints during a Vatican Mass May 21, the jubilee day for Mexico.

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580) Vol. 111 No. 23, March 16, 2000
Published weekly except the last Thursday in December.
Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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