

# WORLD & NATION

## Leader decries attacks against children, sites

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The head of the U.S. bishops' International Policy Committee called on Palestinian and Israeli leaders at every level to exercise "moral leadership" and to "unequivocally" condemn mob violence as a first step to resolving the crisis in the Middle East.

Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston called for those actions in an Oct. 16 statement titled "Wounded Peace: Conflict in the Holy Land."

"This is not a time for blame and re-tribution," the cardinal said. "It is a time to break the escalating cycle of violence, and to uncover the embers of hope that remain for a just peace."

"It is a time for moral leadership, at every level of Israeli and Palestinian society, that can look beyond the crisis of the moment lest hatred and revenge today poison the opportunities for peace ...," he added.

The latest wave of fighting in the Mideast has left more than 100 people dead and hundreds injured.

Cardinal Law said the violence had "gravely wounded hopes for peace in the Middle East" and left a "disturbing number of victims," especially children.

"Their suffering is tragic testimony, if any were needed, to the importance of today's summit meeting and other efforts to end the violence and revive the peace process," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and others were hold-

ing an emergency summit Oct. 16 at the Egyptian resort of Sharm El-Sheik in an effort to get Mideast peace talks back on track. An announcement of a cease-fire agreement was expected Oct. 17.

The summit and other initiatives aimed at restoring peace "should be a reminder of the importance of the Holy Land for all humanity, and how vital the peace of Jerusalem is to the peace of the world," Cardinal Law said.

"At the same time, the failure to reach a political settlement and the violence of recent weeks remind us that peace cannot be achieved without justice and justice cannot be secured by violence," he said. "The peace process must satisfy the particular, legitimate and reasonable aspirations of both peoples, and must respect principles of justice."

Cardinal Law also said religious leaders have a "special obligation to work unceasingly for peace, especially when religious symbols are under attack and are used to provoke and incite."

"We have been distressed by attacks on shrines and places of worship in the Palestinian Territories and Israel, beginning with Joseph's Tomb and including, among others, attacks on mosques in Tiberias and Jaffa, a Catholic church in Beit Hanina, and a synagogue in Jericho," he said. "As children of the one God, with a common love for the Holy Land, our respect for the holy sites demonstrates our reverence for God among us."



Reuters/CNS

Palestinian demonstrators burn an Israeli flag in the Gaza Strip town of Khan Yones Oct. 16.

## Vatican issued letter to counteract 'wrong-headed' thinking

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The recent Vatican document on salvation and interreligious dialogue drew yet another boundary line across an area of troubled theological and pastoral terrain in the church.

This particular demarcation set aside a so-called "ideology of dialogue" found in certain theological circles and among Catholics in general, which in the Vatican's view tries too hard to find interreligious common ground and does too little to proclaim the unique and universal salvation offered through the church.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which issued the latest declaration in early September, has published a number of similar documents in recent years, on such topics as papal primacy, the authority of bishops' conferences, women's ordination and the limits of dissent. Other Vatican agencies have offered texts clarifying church positions on divorced and remarried Catholics, liturgical questions and procreation issues.

Most of these documents have offered no new teaching, but emphasized certain existing positions as "definitive" and therefore no longer open to argument. The texts share a strongly corrective tone.

Some see in this process a late-in-the-pontificate attempt to nail down present policies in the toughest language possible and preclude change by any future pope.

"In the most traditional sectors of the Catholic Church, a process of refuge-taking is occurring, a frenzy of barring the doors and windows," said an editorial in the most popular Italian daily, *La Repubblica*.

It said the fear is that a future pope could "reform" the current teachings.

But in the view of Cardinal Joseph

Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the three other doctrinal congregation officials who joined him at a press conference Sept. 5, these teachings are not reformable. Putting that fact into clearer focus, they say, is simply an act of "service" necessary for the universal church to stay on its true course.

Is the aim to cut off theological discussion of these topics? Not exactly, say the officials.

"The theological debate remains open. The roads that were leading to blind alleys have been closed," said Salesian Father Angelo Amato, a theologian who helped prepare the latest Vatican declaration.

But what precisely are these blind alleys? The doctrinal congregation, over the years, has not hesitated to censure individual theologians who it thinks stand out as exemplary offenders.

When the doctrinal declaration "Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church" came out, one Rome theologian was awaiting the text with some anxiety. Jesuit Father Jacques Dupuis, a longtime teacher at the Gregorian University, has been under investigation for nearly two years by Cardinal Ratzinger for his book, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*.

On Sept. 4, the day before the document was issued, Father Dupuis met with Vatican officials to discuss his case. Sources said the encounter was inconclusive, and there was some expectation that a note censuring the Jesuit's positions might soon follow.

In the Vatican's view, Father Dupuis' book seems to offer a concrete example of the kind of wrong-headed thinking that would see all religions as valid paths of salvation.

The priest once wrote that the Catholic Church's purpose is not to "render the kingdom of heaven accessible only through itself."

The latest Vatican text, on the other hand, stressed that it would be "contrary to the faith to consider the church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by other religions."

No wonder Father Dupuis may be expecting a notification from the doctrinal congregation.

The trouble is, Father Dupuis doesn't recognize himself in the accusatory picture drawn in the Vatican declaration. He has tried to explain to Cardinal Ratzinger — in a 200-page response in 1998 and another 60 pages in mid-1999 — that he does not think all religions are equally salvific, but he does think other religions have a positive meaning in God's plan for humanity.

Although some of the strongest initial criticism of the document came from other Christian churches in Europe, the Vatican text was aimed more at the Far East. In recent synods of bishops covering Asia and Oceania, Vatican officials have suggested that evangelization in these continents is proceeding too slowly and not aggressively enough, in part because of interreligious sensitivity.

The roots of the latest document go back to 1996, when Cardinal Ratzinger's congregation held a special meeting with India's bishops. One big agenda item was the Vatican's complaint that Indian theologians and pastors were watering down Catholic beliefs in order not to offend the non-Christian majority.

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