

Reuters/CNS

A statue of the Virgin Mary is found in a pile of earthquake rubble from a collapsed home in the neighborhood of Santa Tecla in San Salvador Jan. 14.

Pope, agencies respond to quake

VATICAN CITY (CNS) —Following a major earthquake in El Salvador and surrounding countries, Pope John Paul II offered prayers for victims, and the Catholic charity Caritas pledged to help relief efforts.

In a Jan. 15 telegram and at his Jan. 14 weekly Angelus prayer, the pope said he was deeply saddened by the tragedy, and he urged the international community to mobilize quickly.

Sending "heartfelt condolences" to families of victims, he said in a telegram addressed to Archbishop Fernando Saenz Lacalle of San Salvador that he hoped the disaster would "inspire feelings of solidarity that help to assuage grief and overcome adversity."

The Jan. 13 quake, which measured 7.6 on the open-ended Richter scale, was centered off El Salvador's coast and was felt from Nicaragua to as far north as Mexico City. Most of the damage occurred in and around El Salvador's capital, San Salvador.

The death toll topped 600 and was expected to rise further as rescue workers continued to pull bodies from the rubble. More than 500 were missing and presumed dead. Landslides and mudslides triggered by the earthquake and its aftershocks worsened the disaster's effects, burying people inside their homes.

Foreign aid, including medical supplies, food and blankets, began to arrive Jan. 14, just after President Francisco Flo-

res declared a state of emergency.

But Caritas Internationalis, the Rome-based Catholic charity, stressed the need for financial aid above all else.

In Baltimore, Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' international relief and development agency, pledged an initial \$50,000 to assist victims.

The Jan. 13 quake came just two years after Hurricane Mitch killed nearly 10,000 people, left 2 million homeless and caused \$10 billion in damage, mostly in Honduras and Nicaragua.

Contributions to the earthquake assistance fund can be made by mailing a check to Catholic Relief Services, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, MD 21203-7090; (800) 736-3467.



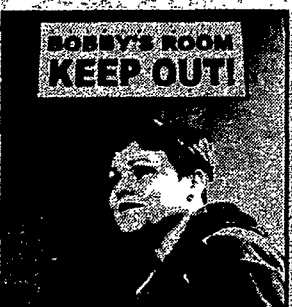
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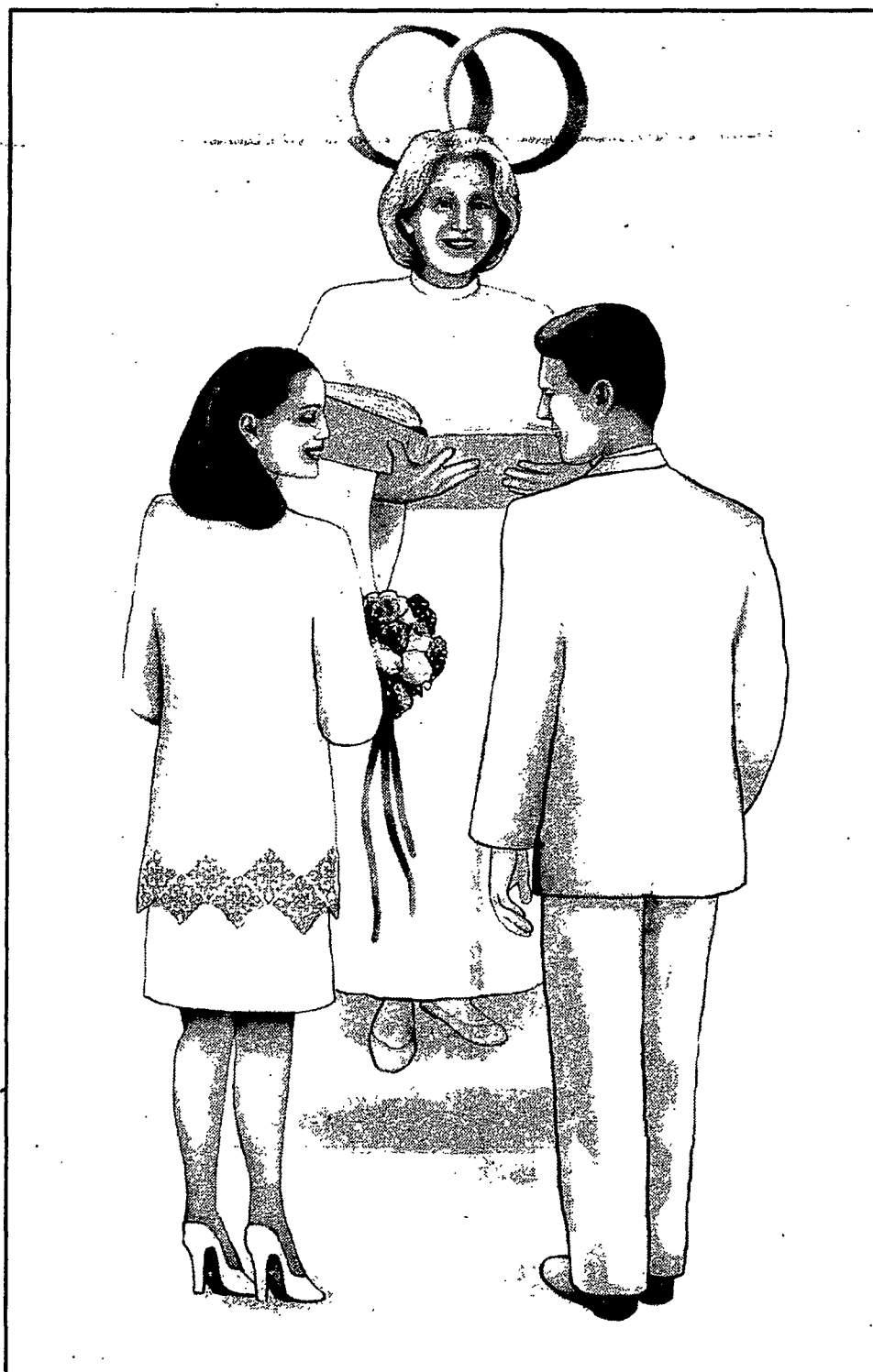


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Weddings undergo changes



Some Sunday morning, you just might witness a wedding during your parish's regularly scheduled liturgy. In fact, hundreds of people at St. Mary's in downtown Rochester and Good Shepherd in Henrietta, most previously informed but some surprised, have found themselves wedding guests during the past several years.

Besides their unusual timing, these "alternative" weddings are hardly the elaborate \$20,000 affair planned by many couples today.

"I wish we could do it more than we do," said Father William Donnelly, pastor of St. Mary's, explaining that weddings at Sunday Mass are "a joyful community celebration of a sacrament."

Catholics in the United States are just becoming aware of this option, which liturgists say is permitted under the current 31-year-old rite for celebrating marriage. And the forthcoming English release of the new marriage rite, published in Latin in 1991, likely will bring other changes, including celebration of the rite of marriage in the presence of an assisting lay person, male or female. Celebrations currently are in the presence of a priest or deacon.

Seemed natural

William L. Pickett, diocesan director of pastoral planning, said it "seemed very natural" to get married last July 9 at St. Mary's 9:45 a.m. Sunday Mass. He and his wife, Marilyn Seitz-Pickett, had seen their friends Harold Hacker and Joan Stejn Smett married in such a way in 1997. (The Hackers are featured in a story on Page 14.)

"We thought it would be the way to do it," Pickett said. "Since it was a second marriage (for both), there were a little different dynamics anyway."

Pickett nevertheless understands why his youngest daughter wants a big wedding. The traditional ceremony will enable her to choose several attendants, the decorations and the music.

But as the number of priests continues to decline, Pickett observed, couples who want the Eucharist during their wedding may be forced to celebrate the sacrament at Sunday Mass.

Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy concurred, saying weddings at regu-
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