

Pope beatifies Spanish martyrs

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II beatified 233 martyrs of religious persecution in 1930s Spain, entrusting to their intercession an end to the country's modern-day scourge of Basque terrorism.

As 30,000 mostly Spanish pilgrims in St. Peter's Square interrupted him with sustained applause March 11, the pope said terrorism is "the enemy of humanity" and an inherently losing tactic.

"Terrorism is born of hate and in turn feeds it; it is radically unjust and increases the situations of injustice; and it seriously offends against God and the dignity and rights of persons," he said.

"No motive, no cause or ideology can

justify it," he said.

Basque terrorists in northern Spain have killed some 800 people in their three-decade campaign for a separate homeland. The latest victim, a 25-year-old Spanish policeman, died March 9 in a car bomb attack near San Sebastian.

The martyrs recognized at the March 11 ceremony — the largest beatification ever — included priests, nuns and lay men and women who were killed between 1936 and 1939 in Spain's civil war.

Though they died at the hands of militants in a period of civil conflict, the pope said the martyrs were targeted solely for their religious beliefs.

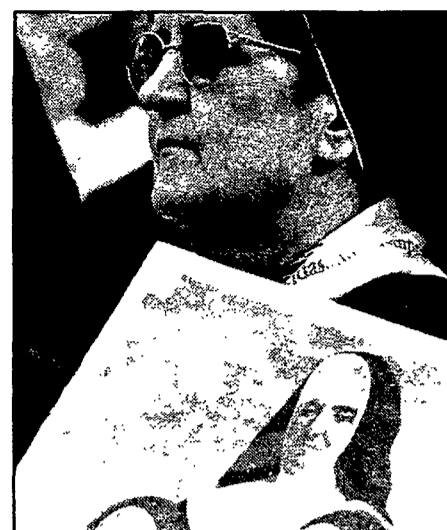
"The newly beatified that are raised today to the altars were not involved in the political or ideological struggles, nor did

they want to get involved in them," he said. "They died exclusively for religious motives."

Most of the new martyrs were killed in the Diocese of Valencia, where religious persecution was particularly intense, but hailed from a total of 37 dioceses. Two of those killed were originally from Uruguay and are their country's first beatified laywomen.

The church investigation of potential martyrs requires proof only that they died for their faith; no miracle or certification of a life of heroic virtue is needed, as is the case for normal beatifications.

Nonetheless, all of those beatified March 11 had also led lives of extraordinary holiness, the pope said, and without exception forgave their executioners.



Catholic Press Photo/CNS
A Spanish nun holds an image of newly beatified Spanish martyrs March 11 in St. Peter's Square.



Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 112 NO. 23 ■ THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2001 ■ 75¢ ■ 16 PAGES

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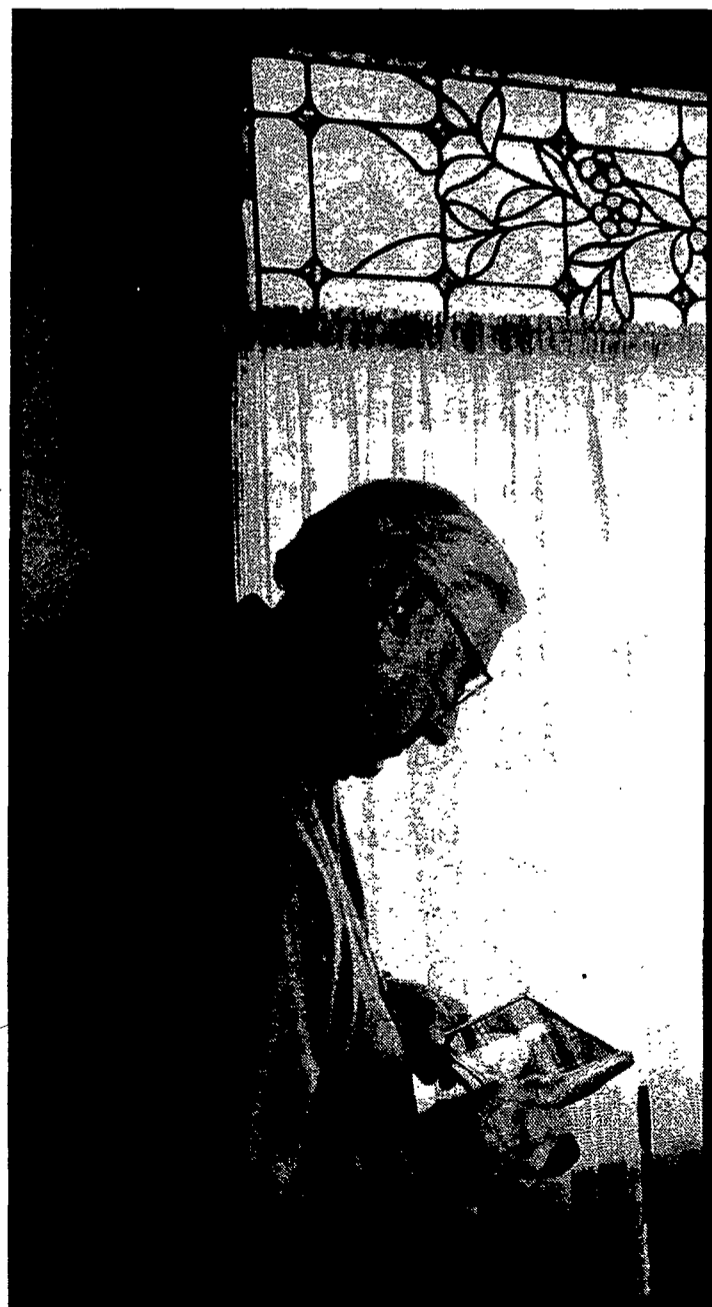


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Going it alone



"Widow" is not exactly a term of endearment in Joyce Ott's book.

"Oh, I hate that word! I say I have lost my husband, and I am alone," remarked Ott, whose husband, Ron, died in 1998.

Her disdain for the word, she said, stems from a tour she recently took to Nashville. "A guy was taking pictures of our group and he said 'All the widows down in front.' I could have socked him," Ott said, laughing.

Ott explained that she doesn't need extra reminders that she is alone after 38 years of marriage. Dining by herself most of the time serves that purpose.

"I fix something and have the TV on to eat. It's a big change, not to have somebody to do things with," said Ott, 68, a resident of Scottsville.

Widowhood is a reality for a significant percentage of Americans. According to the U.S. Department of the Census, in 1999 there were 20.2 million women and 14.2 million men ages 65 and older. Nearly half the women, 45 percent, were widowed; 14 percent of the men were widowed. The ratio of widows to widowers was more than 4-to-1 (8.4 million to 1.9 million) based on longer life expectancy for women, the tendency for women to marry men who are older, and the greater likelihood for men to remarry.

Solitude is one of many challenges facing those who have lost a spouse. Widows and widowers must also grapple with issues related to health, social life, finances, employment, living situation, household upkeep, legal issues and dating. Through it all, they must work simultaneously through their own grief process.

A surviving spouse may also be saddled with unforeseen decision-making if the couple had not discussed the practical consequences of widowhood. Among those decisions: securing an attorney; reorganizing bank accounts; notifying the spouse's employer, pension company and life-insurance agent of the death; settling the spouse's estate; revising one's own will; and budgeting for a new living situation.

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STORY BY MIKE LATONA

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA DIXON