

Bush rejects pope's plea for McVeigh

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — President Bush has rejected a plea by Pope John Paul II for the life of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

McVeigh, 33, is slated to die May 16 at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind. He was convicted in 1997 of 11 federal crimes of conspiracy and murder in the April 1995 bombing that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and killed 168 people.

In separate letters in late April, the pope and Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein of Indianapolis urged President Bush to commute McVeigh's death sentence to life imprisonment.

White House spokeswoman Claire

Buchan said April 27 that "a clemency decision is not before the president."

Two days later on "Fox News Sunday," Vice President Richard B. Cheney rejected the papal clemency request with the comment, "I think that'd be a mistake."

"I think if there was ever a man who deserves to be executed, it's probably Timothy McVeigh," Cheney said.

The pope's plea for McVeigh was relayed to Bush by the papal nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo. Neither the White House nor the Vatican Embassy in Washington released the text of the nuncio's letter, but both confirmed that it was a papal request not to execute McVeigh.

Pope John Paul repeatedly has called on nations to end capital punishment and in recent years has requested clemency for

numerous Americans on death row, but McVeigh's is by far the most celebrated case in which he has made such a plea.

Archbishop Buechlein, whose archdiocese includes Terre Haute, also wrote to Bush seeking clemency and on April 26 urged Catholics to join him in his cathedral May 15 for a prayer vigil for an end to violence.

McVeigh's death by lethal injection would be the first execution carried out by the federal government since 1963.

Archbishop Buechlein said, "I call on Catholics and all people of good will to join me in observing May 15 as a special 'Day of Prayer for Peace and for an End to Violence' in our country and throughout the world."

He asked priests and other pastoral



Reuters/CNS

Catholic officials oppose Timothy McVeigh's execution set for May 16.

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Catholic Courier

DIocese of ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

VOL. 112 NO. 30

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2001

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'Top consultant' assesses cathedral



EDITOR'S NOTE:
This story is part of an occasional series regarding the planned renovation of Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Picture your diocesan cathedral as a hub for concerts, art exhibits and lectures by nationally known speakers.

Imagine attending Mass and these social events in a building with quality lighting and sound, as well as other upgrades.

If Father Richard S. Vosko's vision becomes reality, these elements will all be evident in a revamped Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Father Vosko, 57, is liturgical design consultant for the renovation of Rochester's cathedral, due to take place from 2003 to 2004. He has big plans for Sacred Heart — which, he said, is the proper attitude whenever a diocesan cathedral is the focus.

"It ought to be the place," Father Vosko said, explaining that a cathedral, as the model church of a diocese, should offer cultural as well as spiritual opportunities and strive to draw large crowds.

According to Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, the renovation project is in capable hands. In his 30-year career, Father Vosko has overseen redesign projects for an estimated 200 Catholic churches — including 12 cathedrals — in the United States and Canada. He is currently involved in seven cathedral projects.

"It's safe to say that Dick is the top liturgical design consultant in the country," said Workmaster, an ex officio member of the cathedral renovation committee.

A priest of the Diocese of Albany, Father Vosko will share his renovation reflections in Rochester May 7-9. He has set three public meetings, from 7 to 9 p.m. each night, at Nazareth Academy.

Father Vosko will give slide presentations and, along with members of Sacred Heart's renovation committee, conduct

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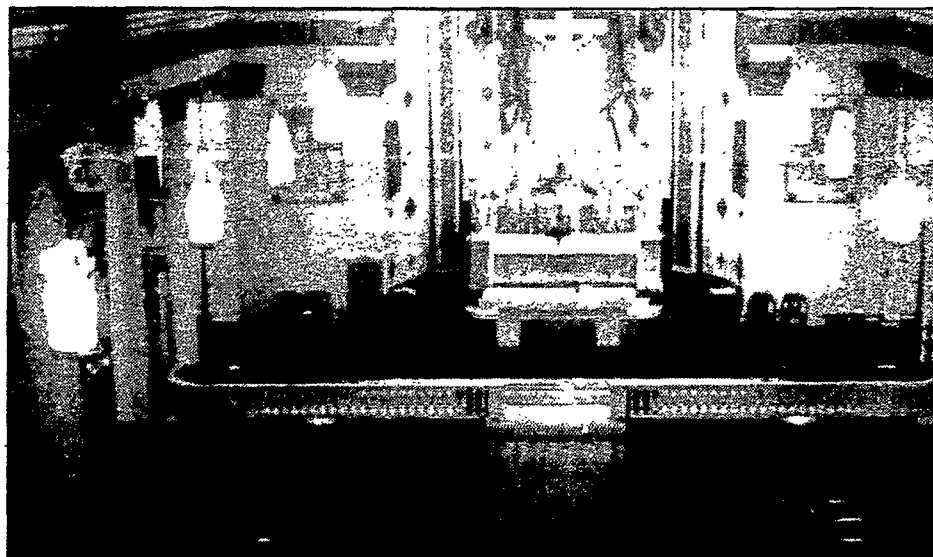


Photo courtesy of Father Vosko

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Nashville *before*

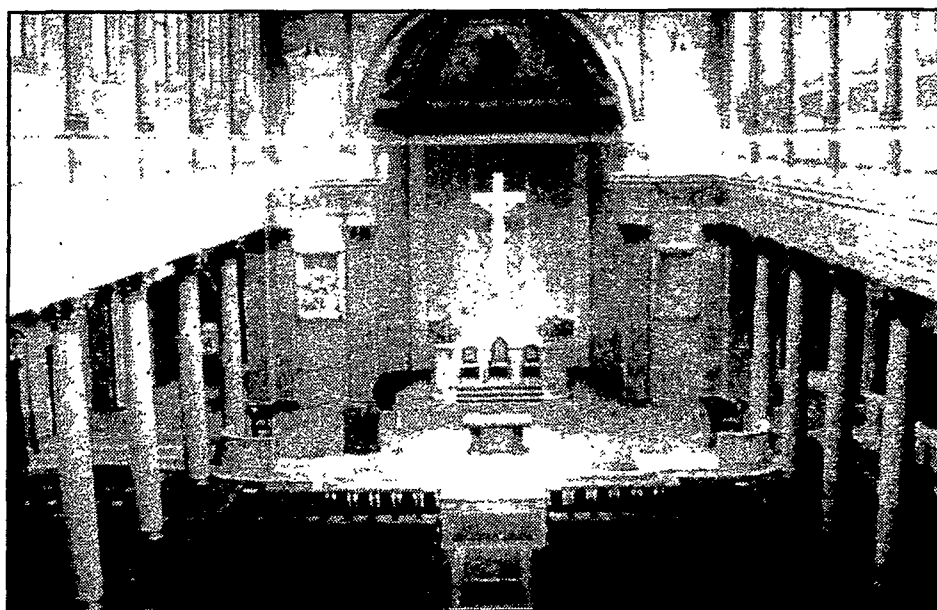


Photo courtesy of Father Vosko

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Nashville *after*

STORY BY MIKE LATONA