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Reuters

Orthodox nuns in Ukraine pray as they take part in a protest in front of the parliament building in Kiev May 24. Hundreds of Orthodox priests, nuns and believers participated in the protest against Pope John Paul II's scheduled June 23-27 visit.

Russians wary of papal trip

MOSCOW (CNS) — Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, the Vatican's foreign minister, defended the upcoming papal trip to Ukraine as a simple "pilgrimage" that should not alarm the Russian Orthodox.

"The (Russian) Orthodox Church has 80 million members and we have 500,000 (in Russia). We can't be any kind of danger for the Orthodox Church," Archbishop Tauran said at a press conference marking the 10th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Catholic Church in Russia.

In Russia, politicians and Russian Orthodox Church leaders are speaking out with increasing regularity against the pope's visit to neighboring Ukraine June 23-27.

Many opponents suspect that the pope's visit is part of a Vatican plan to expand the Catholic Church's influence on the territory of the former Soviet Union, which the Russian Orthodox Church considers its exclusive canonical territory.

Archbishop Tauran tried to lay these fears to rest, saying: "It is a religious event and a pilgrimage. It is exactly what the pope would like to do in Russia."

A papal visit to Moscow anytime soon seems highly unlikely, because relations between the Vatican and the Russian Orthodox Church appear to be at a post-Soviet low.

The Moscow Patriarchate has said relations with Rome will become even worse if the pope meets with Ukrainian Orthodox leaders whom the patriarchate considers to be in schism. Some of those leaders belong to Ukraine's council of churches and are expected to participate in a papal meeting with the council.

Patriarch Alexei II of Moscow, who was traveling in Azerbaijan when Archbishop Tauran was in Moscow, said May 27 the pope's visit to Ukraine "will not bring soothing and pacification between religious groups in Ukraine, but will bring further aggravation."



Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 112 NO. 34 ■ THURSDAY, MAY 31, 2001 ■ 75¢ ■ 16 PAGES

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Hail Mary Mother of Jesus, Queen of Heaven

Among the many titles Christians have given to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are the Immaculate Conception, Hope of Christians, Queen of Peace and Queen of Heaven.

Caitlin Beecher, a senior at Our Lady of Mercy High School in Brighton, would like to add one more title of honor:

"Supermom."

Lest the reader think Caitlin was being disrespectful, on the contrary, she spoke these words in awe. Not surprising, considering that she was one of 18 girls in the May Court at Mercy that took place in the school's May Day Crowning of Our Lady on May 25.

Mary was "an amazing person," Caitlin said, because she stood by her son when most people were criticizing him, and when they eventually abandoned him on the cross.

"She was really strong," said Caitlin, 17, a parishioner at St. Joseph's Parish, Livonia. "I see her as a role model ... She just went ahead and did what God asked her to do."

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Meghan Marie Doyle (left) proclinator of the May Day ceremonies, Clare Ann Costigan (middle), May Queen, and Helen Katherine Root, crown bearer, stand on the grotto after the crowning of Mary at Our Lady of Mercy High School May 25.

STORY BY ROB CULLIVAN • PHOTOS BY KARIN VON VOIGTLANDER

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