

WORLD & NATION

Pope implores president to buck stem-cell research

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy — Pope John Paul II asked President George W. Bush to oppose research on stem cells from embryos, as the U.S. leader deliberated over releasing federal funds for the practice.

Meeting July 23 with Bush for the first time, the pope said the United States had a "special responsibility" to the rest of the world and could point the way to a "truly humane future" by defending human life and dignity through legislation.

Bush, accompanied by his wife, Laura, and 19-year-old daughter Barbara, arrived at the papal summer residence southwest of Rome in a motorcade of black Cadillac limousines flying American flags.

The president met with the pope behind closed doors for 30 minutes. Afterward, joined by Vatican officials and Bush's entourage, the leaders exchanged speeches and small gifts.

In his speech, the pope told Bush that political decisions regarding human life "have the gravest consequences for the future of civilization."

The widespread legalization of abortion has led to "a tragic coarsening of consciences," opening the way to acceptance of euthanasia, infanticide and "proposals for the creation for research purposes of human embryos, destined to destruction in the process," the pope said.

"A free and virtuous society, which America aspires to be, must reject practices that devalue and violate human life at any stage from conception until natural death,"

he said.

Bush was due to decide whether to allow federal funds for research on stem cells from embryos, which are killed in the process. The Catholic Church supports only harvesting stem cells from other tissues, like livers, placentas and umbilical cords, a process it says does not threaten human life.

At a Rome press conference later in the day, Bush said he would take the pope's "point of view into consideration."

He said the question was particularly thorny and involved "the need to balance value and respect for life with the promise of science and the hope of saving life."

According to Bush and an informed Vatican source, the pope did not raise the issue of embryonic stem-cell research in the leaders' private discussion.

The Vatican said the pope and Bush talked about the violence-torn Middle East, religious freedom and assistance to developing countries.

Bush was in Italy for a July 20-22 meeting of the leaders of the world's most industrialized countries.

The pope told Bush that wealthy nations must ensure that all the world's inhabitants enjoy the economic benefits of globalization. He said the church was deeply concerned by the "tragic fault line between those who can benefit from these opportunities and those who seem cut off from them."

Before their statements, the two stood on an open balcony overlooking Lake Albano, which was dotted with kayakers in bright summer sunshine.

"It's spectacular," Bush told the pope. "On a hot day it looks like a place one would



CNS photo from Vatican

Pope John Paul II shows U.S. President George W. Bush the view from the pontiff's summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, July 23. In his first meeting with Bush, the pope spoke of the "special responsibility" the United States has to promote freedom and defend human dignity throughout the world.

want to go swimming."

During the ceremony, Bush sat straight in his chair, hands folded in his lap. His wife and daughter wore dark business suits and black lace veils.

Bush, a Methodist, thanked the pope for reminding Americans of their "special calling to promote justice and to defend the weak and suffering of the world."

"You remind us that wealth must be matched with compassion and moral purpose," he said.

He gave the pope a two-volume leather-bound anthology of American poetry, a first edition printed in 1849.

The U.S. leader also met for 15 minutes with Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state.

A Vatican source said that during his meetings, Bush seemed well prepared on foreign affairs topics and took charge of the discussions. He was accompanied by Condoleezza Rice, his national security adviser.

The source said Cardinal Sodano asked Bush to use U.S. influence to promote closer ties between the Vatican and communist China, where Catholics are forbidden to profess loyalty to the pope. Vatican officials also thanked Bush for American defense of religious freedom around the world.

Hostilities mar summit meeting

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

GENOA, Italy — While advancing a program to relieve the debt of the world's poorest countries, the summit of leaders of the world's most developed countries was overshadowed by violent confrontations between police and anti-globalization demonstrators.

Pope John Paul II, talking July 22 about the Group of Eight summit, expressed his "pain and sadness for the hostilities which exploded there, unfortunately with serious consequences."

A 23-year-old Italian demonstrator was shot and killed by police July 20 as he appeared set to throw a fire extinguisher at a jeep in which the officers were riding.

"Violence is not the path to reaching a just solution of existing problems," the pope said the last day of the July 20-22 summit.

The pope referred to the substance of the G-8 discussions July 23 as he met U.S. President George W. Bush at Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

Bush participated in the summit along with the leaders of Canada, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia.

In addition to debt relief, the G-8 leaders announced creation of a \$1.2 billion fund to fight AIDS and other diseases and agreed to launch a new round of interna-

tional trade talks that, among other things, would focus on improved market access for developing nations.

"In recent days, the world's attention has been focused on the process of globalization, which has so greatly accelerated in the past decade, and which you and other leaders of the industrialized nations have discussed in Genoa," the pope told Bush.

"While appreciating the opportunities for economic growth and material prosperity which this process offers, the church cannot but express profound concern that our world continues to be divided, no longer by the former political and military blocs, but by a tragic fault line between those who can benefit from these opportunities and those who seem cut off from them," Pope John Paul said.

The pope told the president, "A global world is essentially a world of solidarity."

The summit participants made a commitment to promoting wider access to technology, but especially to further reducing the foreign debt of the world's poorest countries.

In their final statement, the leaders said their debt-relief initiative, drawn up in Cologne, Germany, last year, "aims to increase growth, reduce poverty and provide a lasting exit from unsustainable debt by reducing debt on the basis of strengthened policy reforms."

Thus far, they said, 23 nations have had \$53 billion of their original \$74 billion combined debt forgiven.

The leaders made further commitments to debt relief combined with development aid and social spending in the poor nations.

While the G-8 leaders were meeting in Genoa, the U.N.'s economic and social council was meeting in Geneva, discussing many of the same topics.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, the Vatican's representative at the U.N. meeting, said, "Globalization will only truly serve the human family if it becomes a process of inclusion."

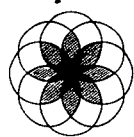
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