

WORLD & NATION

Pontiff beatifies seven during Oct. 7 liturgy

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In a liturgy that celebrated saintliness around the world, Pope John Paul II beatified seven people, including the Canadian founder of a religious order dedicated to serving the sick and the poor.

Others beatified during the Oct. 7 Mass included two martyrs: an Armenian archbishop killed by Turks in the early 1900s and a German journalist executed by the Nazis in 1945.

The pope looked animated as he presided over the Mass in a sunny St. Peter's Square, in front of a crowd that included more than 200 bishops in Rome for a month-long synod. Beatification is one of the last major steps before someone is declared a saint.

Declared "blessed" for her life of holiness and sacrifice was Sister Emilie Tavernier Gamelin, who ministered to the needy in 19th-century Montreal before dying during a cholera epidemic in 1851. Her order, the Sisters of Providence, today carries on her work on four continents.

At the start of the Oct. 7 liturgy, biographical sketches of the newly beatified were read aloud. Montreal Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte described the difficult life of Emilie Tavernier, born in 1800 in Montreal, the last of 15 children whose parents soon died and left them orphans.

She married in 1923 and had three children, but each of them died, then her husband died. After several years of happiness as a wife and mother, she found

herself alone at age 28. Deep prayer following these trials stirred a sense of compassionate charity, and she began opening her home to the needy.

A mentally handicapped child and his mother were the first guests, soon followed by a long procession of elderly, orphans, prisoners, immigrants, unemployed, deaf people and others in need. Her home became known as the "House of Providence."

The local bishop sent others to help, and from this experience the Sisters of Providence were born, with Mother Gamelin as their superior. Some of the nuns died while ministering to the sick during epidemics of cholera and typhus.

Blessed Gamelin became ill and died of cholera, telling her sisters in her parting words: "Humility, simplicity, charity, but above all charity." Her liturgical feast will be Sept. 23, the anniversary of her death.

The others beatified during the ceremony were:

- Archbishop Ignatius Maloyan, an ethnic Armenian martyred in Turkey during the harsh repression by Ottoman Turks in 1915. Along with several other Christians, he was arrested on the pretext of harboring weapons, then was shot to death after refusing to convert to Islam.

- Nicholas Gross, a German journalist who promoted the church's social teaching and defied Nazis as "mortal enemies." The father of seven children, he joined the resistance against Hitler, was arrested, imprisoned and tortured, and was executed at age 46 in 1945.

- Sacred Heart Sister Eugenia Picco,



Reuters/CNS

The images of Canadian Sister Emilie Tavernier Gamelin (left) and German Sister Maria Euthymia Uffing hang from the facade of St. Peter's Basilica during an Oct. 7 beatification service. Blessed Gamelin is founder of the Sisters of Providence. Blessed Uffing treated war prisoners during World War II.

who struggled against her own ill health while ministering to the poor and neglected of northern Italy, especially during World War I.

- Father Tommaso Maria Fusco, an Italian known for his life of spirituality and preaching, who established orphanages and homes for the needy in the 19th century and who helped found a woman's religious order with a special ministry among orphans.

- Father Alfonso Maria Fusco, another Italian who founded and oversaw a women's religious order that taught and cared for orphans in the 19th century.

- Mercy Sister Maria Euthymia Uffing, a German nun who treated war prisoners during World War II. She was known for her compassion and friendliness and sometimes hid food in the garbage cans of the prison hospital so hungry prisoners could find it.

Bishop addresses job cuts

By Mary Durran
Catholic News Service

MONTREAL — In the face of announced job cuts and fears about the fate of the North American economy, the president of the Quebec bishops' assembly urged companies to remember their "social debt."

"We are sympathetic to the plight of those workers who will lose their jobs and the repercussions that will have on their families," said Bishop Raymond Saint-Gelais of Nicolet, newly elected president of the Quebec bishops' assembly.

"These companies have profited from public subsidies. It is just that they should repay some of the social debt they have contracted, and especially that they should avoid profiting from the situation to the detriment of workers," he said.

The bishop spoke at an early October press conference at the Techni Paint factory in Trois Rivières, west of Quebec City. The same week, Techni, which paints airplanes for Bombardier, announced it was closing its plant, resulting in a loss of 90 jobs.

Thousands of job cuts have been announced in Canada since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

General Motors announced that its Boisbriand plant will close next year, laying off thousands in the Montreal suburb. Telecommunications giant Nortel Networks announced a further loss of 22,000 jobs, bringing to 49,500 the company's job cuts across Canada this year. Air Canada announced 5,000 jobs are to be cut nationwide.

Such cuts will have direct repercussions on Quebec, where Nortel and Air Canada are major employers.

Bishop Saint-Gelais suggested that the current situation could present a "unique opportunity to reflect on what kind of future we wish to offer to future generations" and that such reflection could take place in community-based discussion groups. Such discussions could, among other benefits, lead to a better appreciation of the work of the Quebec Collective for an Anti-Poverty Law, which the bishop said it is "more urgent than ever" to support.

The collective has lobbied for a bill in the Quebec Assembly prioritizing the elimination of poverty and increasing income for the poorest 20 percent of the population. Bishop Saint-Gelais said the collective has received support from more than 215,000 people throughout Quebec, which has a population of 7 million.

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Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)
Vol. 113 No. 2, Oct. 11, 2001

Published weekly except the last
Thursday in December.

Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, 716/328-4340. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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