

WORLD & NATION

Bishops ponder security vs. freedom

By Jonathan Luxmoore
Catholic News Service

WARSAW, Poland — Catholic bishops from member countries of the European Union have warned governments that a planned clampdown on terrorism could endanger human rights.

"The creation of a European area of freedom, security and justice, in which the rights and freedoms of all are protected, is a highly valuable development," said the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community.

The bishops said they were "concerned that legislation rushed through in response to the current terrorist threat could lead to the erosion of such protection."

The statement follows a Nov. 22-23 commission meeting in Brussels, Belgium. The commission represents around 800 bishops from the European Union's 15 member states.

The statement said the bishops were worried that the European Union's proposed anti-terrorism measures could "inadvertently encourage discrimination" against the "most vulnerable members" of society, including asylum-seekers and ethnic minorities.

"The freedom and independence we en-

joy in Europe are not shared by many people in other parts of the world, and the absence of democratic means of (expression) can provoke fanatical extremism," the statement said.

The commission meeting, attended by the European Union's Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, Antonio Vitorino, comes ahead of a Dec. 6-7 European Union justice ministers' summit, which is expected to agree on a common definition of terrorism and a single European arrest warrant.

John Coughlan, commission spokesman, told Catholic News Service that church leaders were worried about the environment being created by anti-terrorism measures and had already expressed concern to European Union officials.

"The bishops are anxious that the introduction of strict legislation will give certain individuals the impression it's OK to be hostile to foreigners and immigrants," Coughlan said.

"We hope our words of caution will be heeded and the right balance maintained between security and protection of human rights," he said.

The December European Union measures will accompany tighter controls on suspected terrorist sympathizers currently

planned by several European governments, including Britain's, that are comparable to measures adopted Oct. 26 by the U.S. government.

In its statement, the commission said it welcomed the European Union's "rejection of any equation of groups of fanatical terrorists with the Arab and Muslim world," but believed more also should be done to foster dialogue among religions.

"Interreligious dialogue is about far more than religious tolerance: It is a serious and ongoing commitment, based on mutual respect and self-understanding," the statement read.

The statement is the second by the commission since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In a Sept. 17 appeal, the commission urged the European Union to "take necessary measures to combat terrorism," while avoiding a "spiral of violent retaliation" and addressing "all injustice in the world."

In his CNS interview, Coughlan said that "poverty, inequality and lack of democracy may not cause terrorism, but they provide a breeding ground for it."

"Sept. 11 has to be seen as a singular event, with its own reasons and motivations. But it isn't just a question of going after the terrorists — we also have to establish a fairer world order," he said.

Pope headed for Bulgaria

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II will make his first pastoral visit to Bulgaria next May, according to Bulgarian officials.

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy announced Nov. 28 that the pope would visit the country May 23-25, according to news agencies in Bulgaria.

Passy made the announcement after meeting with Mggr. Renato Boccardo and other Vatican trip planners in Sofia, the Bulgarian capital.

Passy, who is also secretary of the national welcoming committee for the pope, said that "the practical organization of the visit starts today." He said the papal visit was a long-awaited event for the whole country, where Orthodox Christians make up 85 percent of the population.

The Vatican has not yet announced the trip, which would be the latest in a series of papal visits to former Soviet-bloc nations, many of them with an Orthodox majority.

May 24 is when the Orthodox annually honor St. Cyril and Methodius, the Greek missionary brothers who evangelized Central Europe in the 10th century. Normally the pope welcomes a Bulgarian delegation to the Vatican on this date. This next year he will lead celebrations in Bulgaria, Passy said.

Officials said the pope would meet with Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox and Muslim representatives during his visit. The papal planning team reportedly met in Rome with Mggr. Basilios of the Bulgarian Church of Bulgaria and Bulgarian Catholic Mggr. Selim Melchior, who said the visit was "a great joy."

After World War II, Mggr. Melchior reported that, although the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria had not invited the pope because of canonical and practical considerations, the Bulgarian Church would open the pope's itinerary to the country, he said.

Pope says priests indispensable to parish

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II warned it would be a "fatal error" to think that the current shortage of priests means tomorrow's church would have to make do without ordained ministers.

He said priests alone can serve as pastors of parishes because of their unique representation of Christ in church communities.

"The church community absolutely needs the ministerial priesthood to have Christ, head and pastor, present in it," the pope said Nov. 23 to participants in the plenary assembly of the Congregation for the Clergy.

"Other faithful certainly can work with (the priest) actively, even full time, but they cannot substitute (for) him as

pastor because they have not received the ministerial priesthood," he said.

Because of this, the word "pastor" should be used only for priests, he added.

The pope said the difficulties created in parishes by priest shortages in some regions should lead to more fervent prayers for vocations.

"It would be a fatal error to resign to the current difficulties and de facto act like one must prepare for a church of tomorrow (that is) envisioned almost without any priests," he said.

The pope said the priest's main role in the parish was to celebrate the Eucharist, "the source and summit of church life" and Christ's privileged presence in the church.

"Without eucharistic worship — as its beating heart — the parish dries up," he

said.

The priest's "sacramental representation" of Christ also includes a special "efficaciousness" as a minister of Scripture, the pope said. This is why only ordained clergy can read the Gospel and preach at Mass, even if some lay members of the parish are better orators, he said.

Nor can the priest abdicate his function as the parish's guide, in which he has a "special relationship with Christ, head and pastor," the pope said.

He said the participation of lay people in running the parish was "to be wished for and often necessary," but they could not "be surrogates in any way for the priest's role as pastor."

Parish councils were useful aids to the pastor but must not overstep their strictly consultative role, he added.

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