

WORLD & NATION

U.S. cardinals report on meetings at Vatican

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — "Zero tolerance" became the focal point for public discussion of clergy sexual abuse of minors after the U.S. cardinals returned from an April 23-24 summit with Vatican officials in Rome.

"All of the cardinals are agreed on zero tolerance," Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua of Philadelphia told reporters at a news conference April 26.

"By that I mean that we are all agreed that no priest guilty of even one act of sexual abuse of a minor will function in any ministry or any capacity in our dioceses."

The degree of unanimity on the issue was not that clear, however.

In a round of Sunday talk shows April 28, Chicago's Cardinal Francis E. George said when the bishops meet this June they may end up adopting a zero-tolerance policy because of the public pressure for it.

But he argued that "mandated sentences" for all priests guilty of sexual abuse may not be the answer.

On NBC's "Meet the Press," the cardinal said, "Zero tolerance is not our term. It's a term that's been given us and therefore if you don't meet it, somehow you've failed."

"Zero tolerance for this kind of behavior — of course, there is no question," he said. "Zero tolerance in the sense that one strike, one any kind of possible offense of this nature, and therefore you're ejected from the priesthood — there has to be some discussion."

In a radio interview April 25, Detroit Cardinal Adam J. Maida said, "If one priest would abuse a child after all of this, I would put him out right away. ... It's a horrible



Reuters/CNS

After the special summit in Rome, Boston's Cardinal Bernard F. Law, shown above with a parishioner, appeared steadfast in his determination to remain archbishop of Boston.

thing, and in most cases it's a crime."

Upon his return to Baltimore, Cardinal William H. Keeler said that in the Vatican meeting the bishops got a "green light" to develop a national policy of "zero tolerance on the part of the church after a credible act of child sexual abuse by one of the clergy."

At a round-table with reporters April 26, Los Angeles Cardinal Roger M. Mahony said: "The Holy Father said, 'People need to know that there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young.' To me, it can't be any

more clear than that. If we say the protection of our youth is our No. 1 priority, then zero tolerance is the only answer toward sexual abuse. There are no ifs, ands or buts."

Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington urged a distinction between past offenders and anyone who offends from now on.

He said on "Fox Sunday News" April 28 that he supports removal of any priest accused in the future, but he added that the cardinals are divided about whether such a new policy should apply to past allegations.

Earlier at a news conference in Cleveland he said, "We know now what we have to do. It's unfortunate it took us so long to figure out what we have to do. We are anxious to make sure that not just these notorious priests are thrown out. We want to make sure anyone who does this is thrown out."

After a telephone conference with the other nine bishops of the St. Paul-Minneapolis province, which covers Minnesota and the Dakotas, Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of St. Paul-Minneapolis said April 26 that they all supported zero tolerance.

"I would say, one strike and you're out of pastoral ministry," he said, but added that in some dioceses it might be better to keep an offending priest and place him "in a very restricted ministry whereby children would never come into harm's way."

Archbishop Flynn, head of the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse, is responsible for preparing and presenting proposals for a national policy when the bishops meet June 13-15 in Dallas.

He said the bishops of the 10 dioceses agreed to create an outside auditing process to assess each diocese's handling of

sex abuse issues. They plan to present the results of the process to the rest of the nation's bishops in Dallas.

In Boston, the vortex of the sex abuse scandal over the past three months, Cardinal Bernard F. Law denied published reports April 26 that the Vatican was preparing to give him a Vatican post by June. An archdiocesan statement said the reports "are without substance, groundless, and appear to be pure uncorroborated speculation."

Cardinal Law received another storm of public criticism when it was disclosed April 27 that his vicar general, Bishop Walter J. Edyvean, faxed a letter to all priests opposing a proposed archdiocesan-wide association of parish council members as "superfluous and potentially divisive."

Citing the hierarchical nature of the church, the letter urged priests not to join or support the endeavor.

New York Cardinal Edward M. Egan called a meeting of all his priests April 29 to report on the Rome meeting and get their feedback on the sex abuse issue.

There were also about 100 gay and lesbian pickets in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral April 28, protesting comments by some church officials suggesting that part of the sexual abuse problem is due to the incidence of homosexuality among priests.

Following a state-by-state survey, the Associated Press reported that at least 177 priests have resigned or been removed from their posts across the country since the scandal erupted in Boston in January.

Contributing to this story were Mike Krokos in St. Paul, Mike Nelson in Los Angeles and Dennis Sadouski in Cleveland.

Bethlehem standoff affects nearby residents

By Judith Sudilovsky
Catholic News Service

BETHLEHEM, West Bank — The sounds and the smells of the old city of Bethlehem have changed.

Now instead of the tantalizing smell of exotic spices and sizzling grilled meat mingling with the sounds of tour groups tramping their way to the Church of the Nativity, one hears the crunching of glass underfoot and smells the rotting garbage.

Burned-out hulks of cars litter the old marketplace, which a mere four years ago had been renovated with high hopes and foreign money, ready to greet the stream of millennial-year tourists.

Brightly colored turquoise doors painted for the millennial celebrations have bullet holes through them, while others have been twisted and torn by Israeli soldiers who went door to door, searching for gunmen they believed responsible for violent attacks on Israeli civilians.

Almost a month after the Israeli incursion, only a few residents venture outside their homes, while children play among the shattered cars and scattered clothes that old women once sold at the market.

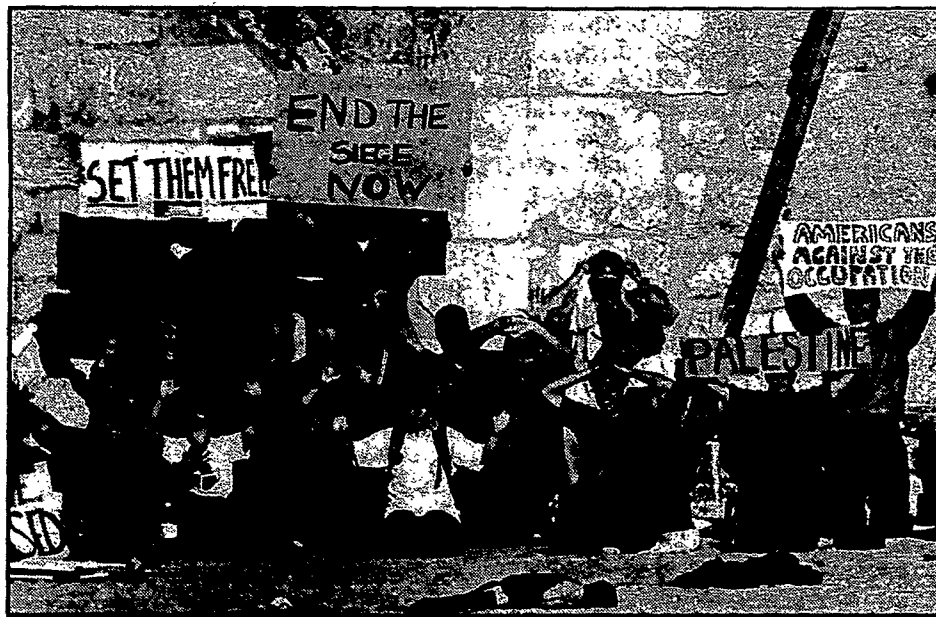
A group of journalists and photographers stake out a place at the end of one alleyway facing the Church of the Nativity, waiting to catch a glimpse of negotiators and people leaving the church as the three-weeklong standoff continues. Farther away from the church, Alia, a 32-year-old Muslim resident of the old city, is on her own stakeout. She sweeps away at the mound of collecting refuse, pushing away the rancid green water from her doorway.

"Look what has happened," she said, looking about her at the reeking piles of garbage. "I am thinking of cleaning it up myself."

Alia also referred to the rotting meat at nearby butcher shops.

"Notice the smell?" she asked. "Diseases will come to us. I hope the press will make the U.N. come here to help us clean."

She said soldiers came several times to



Reuters/CNS

International peace demonstrators stage a sit-in at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem April 28. Negotiations to end the standoff ceased at the end of April.

the home she shared with her mother and brother's family, but did not break or steal anything.

Now her brother has taken his children outside the old city, but Alia and her mother stayed to protect the house from looting and soldiers.

She is not sure if the gunmen inside the Church of the Nativity have weapons, since she only knows what the media has said.

"Both Muslims and Christians are very sad about what has happened in the church and hope the situation will be over and the church will be safe and the men inside will be safe," she said.

Her mother is 70 years old, she said, and she never saw so much destruction in any of the other wars she lived through.

"The Israelis do something and then the Palestinians answer back; that is what is happening. What we need is for this to become clean," said Alia.

Another Muslim resident of the city who

requested anonymity noted that the Israelis aim loud noises at the church at all hours of the night, preventing the residents from sleeping.

"They should not have taken in the guns," the man said. "Just like they didn't go into a mosque in Jenin, they shouldn't have gone into a church here," he said.

Basem Hamis, 24, unable to make his way back to his home near the Church of the Nativity, has been staying with friends since the Israelis took over the city.

He was arrested three times, he said; twice he was beaten.

"Of course, I was scared when they put handcuffs on me and blindfolded me," said Hamis, who once worked in the tourist industry. "But I have never been involved in political organizations. I know that would make things difficult for me and my family. That is why the Israelis let me go always."

His only contact with his family now has been by phone, he said.

Cardinal faces lawsuits

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles was hospitalized late April 28 with blood clots in his left lung. The next day he was hit with two lawsuits accusing him of participating in a cover-up of sexual abuse of minors by priests.

At an afternoon press conference April 29, his personal physician, Dr. Lee Parsons, said the cardinal was in good condition, resting comfortably and being treated with blood thinners. He was to remain at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank for several days.

The archdiocese had no immediate comment on the lawsuits themselves, filed by two sets of brothers who claim to have been abused as children in the 1960s and '70s by Father Carl Sutphin, an archdiocesan priest ordained in 1958 who was forced to retire earlier this year.

The archdiocese issued a brief statement, however, emphasizing Cardinal Mahony's "zero-tolerance" approach to any priest or employee found to have abused a child.

"The protection of our young people is paramount," the cardinal said in the statement. "We cannot have priests who abuse young people serving in ministry in the archdiocese."

Parsons said the cardinal had multiple small clots in his lung. He said they may have traveled to the lung after developing in the leg during the cardinal's 12-hour flight home from Rome, where he attended an April 23-24 summit of U.S. cardinals and top Vatican officials on the U.S. clergy sex abuse scandal.

Cardinal Mahony, 66, was admitted to the hospital Sunday night, April 28, after complaining of chest pains, shortness of breath and pain in his right arm.