

WORLD & NATION

Simple ceremony marks pope's exit from Toronto

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

TORONTO — Pope John Paul II left Toronto without fanfare and huge crowds to send him off, but he demonstrated the same strength he had shown throughout World Youth Day by walking up 19 steps to the aircraft taking him to Guatemala City.

The July 29 departure ceremony lasted about 15 minutes and did not include any speeches. Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, who met the pope when he arrived, did not attend the pope's departure. Instead, a small crowd of Canadian dig-

nitaries, World Youth Day officials, church leaders and members of the World Youth Day choir and the cast who performed in the July 26 Way of the Cross greeted the pope on the tarmac of Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport.

The youths, who took many pictures and waved to the pope, immediately cheered him on when he began walking up the plane's steps. They continued to wave and cheer as the pope waved to them from the top of the steps and gave the youths a final blessing.

As the pope boarded the plane and while it prepared for takeoff, the youths continued singing many of the songs that

had been part of World Youth Day.

Hours after the pope left Canada, the president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops called the visit a "huge success" that would help build a "reinvigorated and younger" church.

"There hasn't been such a vibrant experience of faith in Canada as World Youth Day since the visit of Pope John Pope II to Canada in 1984," said Bishop Jacques Berthelet of Saint-Jean-Longueuil, Quebec, conference president.

"Hundreds of ... images will remain imprinted on our hearts, such as the 800,000 people gathered in the wind and rain, singing and praying, guided by the suc-

cessor of Peter, with a courageous smile and comforting words despite the limiting ailments of his body," he said, referring to the pope's July 28 Mass closing World Youth Day.

The pope flew to Guatemala, where on July 30 he was to canonize Blessed Pedro de San Jose Betancur, a 17th-century missionary known as "St. Francis of the Americas" for his work with the poor and sick.

In Mexico City July 31, the pope was scheduled to canonize Blessed Juan Diego, the indigenous man who saw the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531. The next day, he was to beatify two lay missionaries martyred in 1700.

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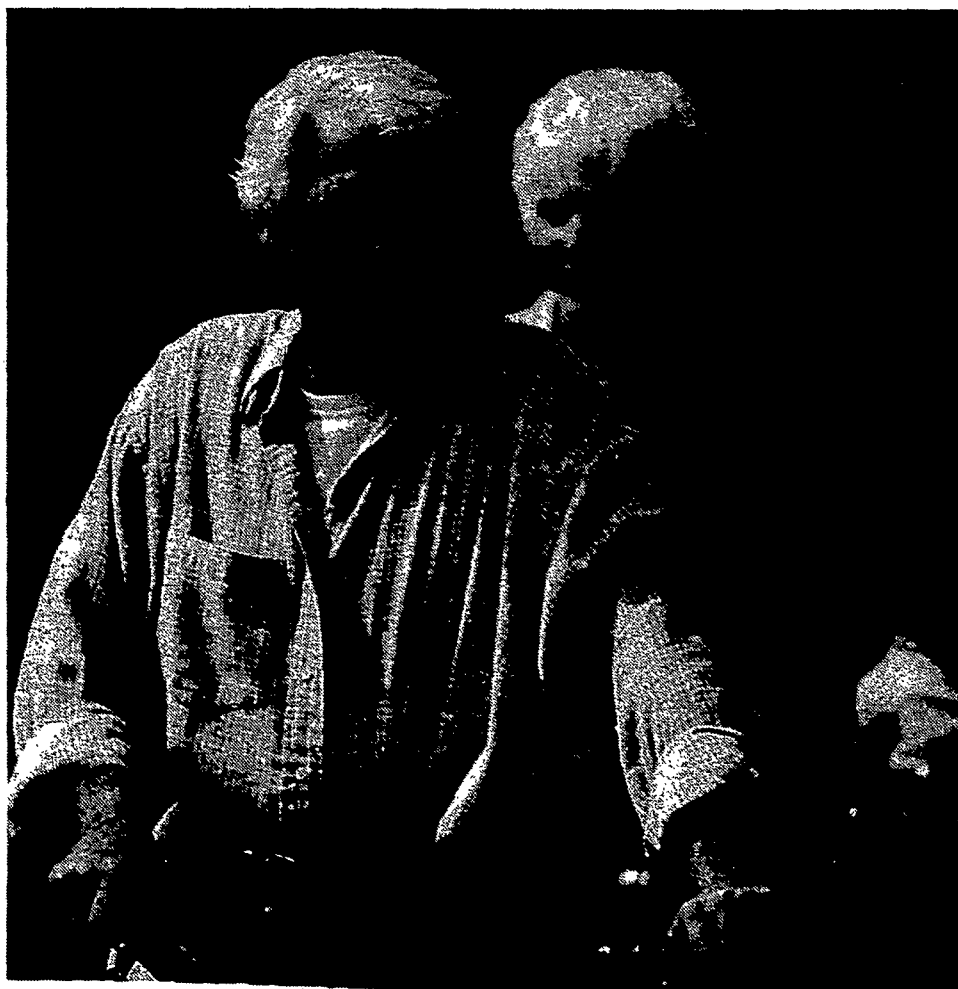


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