

Catholics observe World Day of Sick

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In Vatican City, Washington and at the French shrine at Lourdes, Catholics marked the 11th World Day of the Sick with the anointing of the sick and disabled, discussions aimed at improving health care in the Americas and special concern for those who suffer.

In a talk from his apartment window, Pope John Paul II told the sick they are on the "front line" of prayers for peace and for the family.

"In this year shaken by concerns for the fate of humanity," the pope said, he had asked people to pray the rosary for those two goals.

"You, dear sick brothers and sisters, are on the front line in interceding for these two great aims," he said.

Pope John Paul sent greetings to those participating in the main World Day of the Sick celebration in Washington and those marking the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes in France.

In a written message read by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, papal vicar of Rome, the pope said the celebrations in Rome, Lourdes and Washington formed "a providential crossroads for a choral invocation to the God of life so that he would infuse the suf-

fering of the whole worth with trust, comfort and hope."

The Washington events — marking the first time the observance had been held in the United States — included private meetings of bishops from the United States, Canada, Latin America and the Vatican; a study day devoted to the topics of globalization and bioethical challenges; and an anointing of hundreds of sick pilgrims at the closing Mass in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

At the Mass, Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, said the cross of Christ "gives the world the only way to overcome their pains, sorrows and miseries."

"In the mystery of faith and charity," he said, "Christ takes our sorrows and converts them into happiness. The last horror is death. If death is destroyed, then we will have peace and happiness."

About 2,500 people, including more than 400 people who received the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, attended the Mass Feb. 11.

Earlier that day in Silver Spring, Md., the Vatican official visited Holy



Michael Hoy/CNS

Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, greets Heather Quach and her father, Tony, at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, Md., Feb. 10. The archbishop toured the health care facility during the observance of World Day of the Sick.

Cross Hospital's obstetrics clinic, nursery and neonatal intensive care unit, greeting staff members and patients in English and Spanish.

Feb. 10 was devoted to a study day at the John Paul II Cultural Center. In a talk on globalization, Bishop John Ricard of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla., said, "I worry that we in the North may sometimes export more than life-giving knowledge, technology and drugs — the best of our health care. I fear that we can also export the worst of our culture — a

disrespect for human life, and a belief that some lives are more valuable than others, a sense that abortion can solve human problems, assisted suicide and euthanasia are legitimate responses to the burdens of age and illness, and that human life can be manipulated for profit."

Contributing to this story were Nancy Frazier O'Brien, Lynnea Pruzinsky Mumola and Gerard Perseghin in Washington and Cindy Wooden and John Norton in Rome.

Ecumenical anti-war rally held near U.N. site

Tracy Early/CNS

NEW YORK — A Feb. 15 interfaith prayer service with retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other speakers at a Catholic parish near the United Nations drew hundreds of people and served as a prelude to an afternoon anti-war rally that drew thousands.

The rally was one of hundreds attended by millions of people the same day in other U.S. cities and in other countries. It was a coordinated effort to declare opposition to a U.S.-led war on Iraq and to build support for the anti-war movement.

Beforehand, hundreds, in below-freezing weather, filled the pews and aisles at Holy Family Church for "A Prayer for Peace" service.

To reach the church, whose parish boundaries include the United Nations, attendees had to pass a checkpoint set up as part of an extraordinarily heavy police presence that kept rally participants away from the United Nations.

A court upheld a decision made by

police for security reasons not to allow a group called United for Peace and Justice to march past the U.N. Demonstrators were limited to a stationary rally site a few blocks up the avenue from the U.N. buildings.

The rally remained mostly peaceful, but police reported 300 arrests, mostly for disorderly conduct.

At the service, Oblate Father George V. Perera, associate pastor of Holy Family, welcomed the congregation and recalled the message of peace delivered by Pope Paul VI when he visited the church during his 1965 U.N. appearance.

Leaders of the service included representatives of the Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist communities; as well as Catholics and Protestants.

But the featured speaker was Archbishop Tutu, the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner, who also addressed rally participants.

The archbishop is visiting scholar-in-residence for the current semester at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. He said he was drawn to the school because a friend

from South Africa teaches there.

The archbishop, wearing red vestments, received standing ovations when he entered the church, when he was introduced to speak and at the conclusion of his address.

Archbishop Tutu said the most radical statement Jesus ever made was to tell people, "You are brothers and sisters." President Bush and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein are included in the one family, he said.

But "we know God is weeping" at what these "brothers and sisters" are doing to each other, he said.

Archbishop Tutu suggested that God must sometimes regret creating humanity but "smiles through the tears" when he sees people such as those who were at the church praying for peace.

Similar commitment by an interfaith coalition led to apartheid's destruction in South Africa, he said.

The service was initiated and planned by the New York City Forum of Concerned Religious Leaders, formed to express concerns about the way the war on terrorism

was being conducted, and by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist organization based in Nyack, N.Y.

Dominican Sister Arlene Flaherty, director of Intercommunity Center for Justice and Peace, supported by several religious orders, and the Rev. Peter Laarman, pastor of Judson Memorial, a Protestant church in Greenwich Village, jointly head the forum and led the call to prayer.

They prayed: "We gather with your people of the Middle East ... of the European Union ... of Central America ... of Africa ... of Asia. We gather with your people of Iraq, who live with great fear in the shadow of impending war. We gather as people of the United States, feeling a deep responsibility to bring about peace."

They concluded, "We gather with your people through the ages who have turned swords into plowshares so that peace may be harvested."

Other events in New York in connection with the rally included a prayer service at Holy Name of Jesus Church on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

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