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Mass in the desert

U.S. Marines from the 7th Battalion pray during Mass celebrated at their desert camp 93 miles north of the Iraqi town of An Nasiriyah March 31. As U.S. and British forces continued the campaign to topple Saddam Hussein's regime, Pope John Paul II repeatedly prayed for peace and said the conflict must not be allowed to become a "religious catastrophe."

House closer to vote on partial-birth abortion ban

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The House Judiciary Committee voted 19-11 March 26 to pass the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act without any amendments.

The bill is now in position for a vote on the House floor and is expected to pass by a wide margin. The Senate passed a similar ban in mid-March and President Bush has vowed to sign the legislation into law.

"With the Judiciary Committee's passage of a ban on partial-birth abortions, the ban is one step closer to becoming the first federal law limiting abortion since *Roe v. Wade*," said Cathy Cleaver, director of planning and information for the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities.

"We applaud the committee's work on this crucial bill, and look forward to its passage by the full House soon," she added in a statement.

During a March 25 hearing on the legislation, experts in obstetrics and gynecology testified that the partial-birth procedure is "excruciatingly painful" for the unborn child. Dr. Mark Neerhof, assistant professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology at Evanston Northwestern

Healthcare in Evanston, Ill., also explained the health risks to women from partial-birth abortions.

"According to Dr. Neerhof, partial-birth abortion exposes the unborn human to levels of pain that would fail the federal standards for humane treatment of animals in medical research," Cleaver said. "It is unconscionable that women and children have been made to suffer so needlessly from this procedure."

Rep. Steve Chabot, R-Ohio, who introduced the legislation in the House, said a "moral, medical and ethical consensus exists that partial-birth abortion is an inhumane procedure that is never medically necessary and should be prohibited."

The House version of the legislation does not include the nonbinding resolution in the Senate version that endorsed *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, and said it secured an "important constitutional right."

House committee members who opposed the partial-birth abortion ban as unconstitutional had proposed several amendments to loosen the bill's restrictions, including a provision to eliminate prison terms for doctors who perform the procedure that failed in a 15-8 vote.

Nun's killer caught

NORFOLK, Va. (CNS) — After one kidnapped nun escaped and the decapitated body of another was found, Norfolk police and the FBI ended an intensive manhunt with the arrest early March 27 of the suspected kidnapper and killer, Adrian O'Neill Robinson.

Less than 24 hours earlier, police found the body of Sister Philomena Fogarty, 67, in a parking lot in Virginia Beach, nearly 600 miles from her Georgia home. They said her head, hands and feet had been cut off.

Sister Fogarty was a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and pastoral coordinator of Christ the King Mission in Hamilton, Ga.

She and her housemate, Sister Lucie Kristofik, 71, also with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, had been kidnapped from their home behind Christ the King Church March 23. Sister Kristofik escaped March 25 after the kidnapper left her, bound and gagged, in a motel room in Norfolk.

Bishop J. Kevin Boland of Savannah, Ga., called Sister Fogarty's death "shocking and unbelievable."

"This is a horrible tragedy — a tragedy beyond words," he said in a statement sent from Rome, where he was visiting Savannah seminarians studying at the North American College.

Bishop Boland was scheduled to be chief celebrant and homilist at Sister Fogarty's funeral Mass April 2 in St. Anne Church in Columbus, Ga. Priests from throughout the diocese were expected to join as concelebrants. She was to be buried in the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Cemetery in North Providence, R.I.

A police hunt for Robinson began in Georgia March 23 after, according to family members' reports to police, he accused his father of sexually assaulting him and then killed him, shooting him 16 times. He also allegedly shot at an uncle.

Police believe he then hiked to the nuns' home three miles away and broke in.

When Sister Kristofik escaped in Norfolk, she notified police. She told them the kidnapper had tied them up, took \$900 they had in the house, put the nuns in their car and set off for Norfolk 570 miles away.

Sister Kristofik's escape and report set off a massive manhunt in the Norfolk area. Police spotted Robinson driving the nuns' car alone on a dead-end street in nearby Virginia Beach about 3:30 a.m. March 26. As they closed in, he abandoned the car and fled on foot.



Police said they found human remains in the car and about the same time a security guard found Sister Fogarty's body in a

parking lot not far away. Police did not say what remains were found in the car.

The following night, when Robinson entered a Burger King in Norfolk after it was closed for business, cleaning worker James Bradley recognized him from news reports and hit a silent alarm. Bradley chatted with Robinson and fed him cookies and pie to keep him there until police arrived. They arrested him without incident at 1:45 a.m.

Barbara D. King, Savannah diocesan spokeswoman, said Sister Fogarty had worked in the Savannah Diocese for the past 23 years. From 1980 to 1987 she taught at St. Anne School in Columbus.

Since 1987 she has been pastoral coordinator of Christ the King, a mission church between Hamilton and Pine Mountain, about 20 miles north of Columbus, that is under the care of St. Anne Parish.

King said Sister Fogarty, a native of County Cork, Ireland, was also fluent in French and Japanese and had taught school in Kobe, Japan, for 15 years before coming to Georgia.

Sister Kristofik is on the pastoral care staff of St. Francis Hospital in Columbus. A former missionary in Pakistan, she has been working in Hamilton and Columbus for the past 11 years.

King said March 28, after speaking with Sister Kristofik, that the nun was "doing well" but was not yet ready "to be interviewed about her ordeal."

King said Bishop Boland worked closely with Sister Fogarty in the 12 years he was pastor of St. Anne's before being named bishop in 1995.

She said that before the nuns' abduction, Sister Fogarty had led a weekend retreat for Christ the King youths as they prepared for a joint confirmation with St. Anne youths at St. Anne the evening of April 2. Bishop Boland had already been scheduled to go to Columbus for the confirmation.

The bishop offered his "deepest sympathy to Sister Philomena's religious community and to Sister Lucie" and to the people of Harris and Muscogee counties, where Sister Fogarty "served with unwavering commitment for so many years."