

Church willing to help rebuild Iraq

Pope, mother praying for those war affects

John Thavis/CNS

As Baghdad and other Iraqi cities fell to U.S.-led forces, Esther Brown of Ovid, N.Y., expressed relief that the war seemed to be ending, and the hope that her son, Air National Guard Master Sgt. Earl E. Brown, would come home soon.

"I hope that as soon as his services aren't needed, they send him back," Brown said of her son, who grew up attending Ovid's Holy Cross Parish in the Diocese of Rochester, N.Y. Master Sgt. Brown, a 45-year-old Vermont resident, is currently stationed in United Arab Emirates, and his mother believes that he hasn't gone to Iraq. Then again, she noted, he's not one to tell her much about what's going on in the Middle East.

"He's a very close-mouthed little boy," she said with a chuckle, adding that she's been praying every day for him since he was deployed overseas in early March.

Also praying for those affected by the war was Pope John Paul II. After a Palm Sunday liturgy April 13, the pope prayed in a special way for the many young people in Iraq who were suffering from war and violence.

Earlier last week, the pontiff had expressed sadness at continuing "destruction and death," just hours before U.S. forces occupied main government buildings in Baghdad April 9, signaling the end of the main battle for the capital and the apparent end of the Iraqi regime.

Church officials said the reconstruction of Iraq was a job for the international community, not for a single country. They expressed alarm that the fighting so far had left a power vacuum, which set off widespread looting in major cities.

The Vatican's official reaction to the fall of Baghdad emphasized hopes for the future rather than the devastation of a war the Holy See strongly opposed. It said the departure of Saddam's government marked a "significant opportunity for the population's future."

"Now that Iraq's material, political and social reconstruction is coming into view, the Catholic Church is ready to lend the necessary assistance through its social and charitable institutions," the Vatican said in a statement April 10.

"The dioceses in Iraq are also prepared to offer their own structures to contribute to a fair distribution of humanitarian aid," it said.

A top U.S. official who met with Vatican officials April 9 said church



Reuters/CNS

Iraqi children scramble for water at a distribution point overseen by British troops in Basra in southern Iraq April 11. Availability of clean water was a problem as main water lines in the city were damaged or polluted in fighting.

leaders had made "concrete proposals" on how Catholic groups in Iraq could help distribute much-needed humanitarian aid. The official, John R. Bolton, U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, did not detail the proposals but called the meeting "constructive and helpful."

In Rome, Father Philip Najim, the Rome-based representative of the Chaldean-rite Baghdad Patriarchate, said he hoped Iraq's new political leaders would be chosen according to their merits and not their closeness to "Anglo-American interests."

He also expressed dismay at the failure of coalition forces to stop

widespread looting, even in important archeological sites, after the collapse of the regime.

In early April, representatives of the church's global charity confederation, Caritas Internationalis, made a first assessment of the critical humanitarian situation in Umm Qasr, the only city in war-torn Iraq that had been declared safe by coalition forces.

Alistair Dutton, who headed the Caritas Internationalis team, said that the southern port city of 40,000 people still faced security problems and shortages of clean water, despite a new pipeline that delivers 625,000 gallons of water daily.

Church aid officials expressed alarm that hospitals were looted of essential equipment and supplies.

Rev. Konrad Raiser, a German Lutheran and head of the World Council of Churches, said the victory in Iraq would not give the war moral legitimacy. He said the U.S. administration "seems intent on reinstating the old imperial logic of power that 'might makes right,'" adding that the war eroded the fragile system of international law.

Contains reporting by Rob Cullivan in Rochester.

Diocese sues Boston archdiocese

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (CNS) — Facing a sex-abuse lawsuit over a Boston priest, the San Bernardino Diocese has sued the Boston Archdiocese to recover any damages it incurs. It is believed to be the first time in U.S. history that one diocese has sued another in civil court.

In 1990 the Boston Archdiocese attested to the good standing of Father Paul Shanley when the priest was moving to the San Bernardino area on medical leave and wanted to engage in priestly ministry there.

In Boston, Father Shanley currently faces criminal charges and numerous civil lawsuits of sexually abusing minors in the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

Kevin English, now 30, sued the San Bernardino Diocese in January, alleging that Father Shanley sexually abused him and sent him to other men for additional abuse while the priest was working in the diocese.

In the early 1990s Father Shanley helped out on weekends at St. Anne Church in San Bernardino. At the same time, unknown to parish or diocesan officials, during the week he helped run the Cabana Club, a

clothing-optional gay motel in Palm Springs that he co-owned with a fellow Boston priest, Father John J. White, who at that time was also in California on sick leave.

In its cross-complaint, filed April 1, the San Bernardino Diocese accuses Boston archdiocesan officials of "misrepresentations and suppression of information" in a January 1990 letter that called Father Shanley a "priest in good standing" who "has no problem that would be a concern to your diocese."

The letter was written by Bishop Robert J. Banks, now bishop of Green Bay, Wis., who was then a Boston auxiliary and archdiocesan vicar for administration.

The San Bernardino Diocese said since it was given no warning of Father Shanley's problems "the diocese has no responsibility in the actions that caused this lawsuit and should not bear its financial burden."

"Under the law," it added, "a party named in a lawsuit that wants to shift the legal burden to a responsible third party must file a cross-complaint against that party."

According to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, a Midwest province of Conventual Franciscans in February filed a cross-complaint against the Los Angeles Archdiocese in a clergy sexual-abuse case.

The complaint says that former Conventual Franciscan Father Bertrand W. Horvath, accused of having sexually abused an altar boy in the early 1970s, was on loan to the Los Angeles Archdiocese at the time, making the archdiocese responsible for his actions. It says any damages that may be awarded in a lawsuit against the order and the archdiocese should be the responsibility of the archdiocese alone.

Father Horvath was ordained in 1970. He later left the Franciscans and in the early 1980s joined the Amarillo Diocese in Texas, where he worked until his retirement in 2001.

From 1975 through 1980 his name does not appear at all in the Official Catholic Directory. In the 1971 directory he was at a parish in Kentucky. In 1972 and 1974 he lived at St. Kilian Parish in Mission Viejo, Calif., where the abuse allegedly occurred.