

Peace plan moves forward

PHOENIX BISHOP AVOIDS CRIMINAL PROSECUTION

PHOENIX (CNS) — In an agreement to avoid criminal prosecution, Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien of Phoenix has given up some of his diocesan administrative duties and apologized for allowing priests he knew were suspected of sexual abuse to continue working with minors.

The agreement was signed by the bishop and Maricopa County Attorney Richard M. Romley. It requires the bishop to delegate to a "moderator of the curia" certain administrative duties, including responsibility for revising and enforcing diocesan sex-abuse policies.

Romley also announced that six priests were being indicted in child sex-abuse cases after a yearlong investigation.

BUSH SIGNS \$15 BILLION AIDS BILL INTO LAW

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A new law calling for \$15 billion to fight AIDS globally is part of the "moral duty" of the United States, said President Bush at the bill's May 27 signing.

The bill had been praised by Bishop John H. Ricard of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla., chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Policy, as a major step toward confronting the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

At the signing, Bush singled out the Catholic Medical Mission Board among the organizations that have been working to fight HIV/AIDS internationally.

IRAQ SECURITY RISKS FRUSTRATE RELIEF EFFORT

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As Catholic organizations gear up for relief efforts in Iraq, they are being frustrated by lawlessness and looting, an official of Caritas Internationalis said.

"Right now, Iraqi people are afraid to come to our centers, and our own workers fear being attacked," said Karel Zalenka, head of the International Cooperation Department at Caritas headquarters at the Vatican.

Zalenka spoke in an interview May 27 after returning from a five-day visit to Baghdad and other Iraqi cities with other officials of Caritas Internationalis. He said the disintegration of civil security in Baghdad and other large cities is thwarting humanitarian efforts.

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As terrorism struck across the Middle East, Vatican officials voiced apprehension about the fate of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and the future of the region in the wake of the Iraqi war.

In speeches, interviews and commentaries in mid-May, officials from Pope John Paul II down said the war in Iraq had left serious problems in its wake — including the risk of increased terrorism among Muslim extremist groups.

In the Holy Land, church officials said, the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan needs stronger international support if it is to overcome opposition by Israeli leaders and Palestinian militants.

A series of attacks by Palestinian extremists was the latest threat to the "road map" plan, which envisages a series of parallel steps by Israeli and Palestinian officials, leading to the creation of a Palestinian state.

On May 18, after four Palestinian suicide bomb attacks in the space of 12 hours, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon indefinitely postponed a trip to Washington for talks on the peace plan with U.S. President George W. Bush.

Sharon's government has so far refused to accept the plan. Palestinian leaders have accepted it, but many observers question whether they can effectively dismantle violent extremist groups, a provision of the "road map."

"Certainly, what Sharon has said so far does not bode well for the peace plan," one highly placed Vatican official said May 14.

The official said the Vatican was encouraged when Sharon had spoken of the need for both sides to make "painful concessions" in a peace process, but now the Israeli leader appears to have changed course.



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul II discusses Holy Land peace and the rebuilding of Iraq with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell during a private audience at the Vatican June 2.

TIME IS CRITICAL

Other church experts said the time was critical for the international community — especially the United States — to press for a workable peace agreement in the Holy Land. In the wake of the Iraqi war, many Arabs expect real progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and if that doesn't happen the disappointment will be deep, they said.

Jesuit Father Pasquale Borgomeo, director-general of Vatican Radio, said in an editorial broadcast May 13 that it would be disastrous to delay a Holy Land peace accord any longer.

If the "road map" fails, it would "lengthen that interminable trail of violence, terror and bloodshed that has marked this land for generations," he said.

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Franciscan Father David Jaeger, an Israeli citizen who has worked closely with the Vatican on Middle East affairs, said the "heart of the matter" is how hard the United States presses for acceptance of the plan.

Father Jaeger said one main prob-

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Ss. Peter and Paul, Rochester, to celebrate 160th

Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Rochester, one of the oldest parishes in the diocese, is inviting former parishioners and staff — as well as alumni of the former Ss. Peter and Paul School — to attend its 160th-anniversary celebration on Sunday, June 29.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate the 9:30 a.m. Mass that day at Ss. Peter and Paul Church, 720 W. Main St. Informal tours of the campus and a reception will follow, with a brunch capping the day's festivities. The brunch will begin at noon at the Diplomat Banquet Center, 1

Diplomat Way, off Lyell Avenue.

Sister of St. Joseph Patricia Flass, the parish's pastoral administrator, said that alumni of Ss. Peter and Paul School — which closed in 1972 — have not had any recent reunions, so she's hoping to locate as many former students as possible for the June 29 gathering.

Sister Flass noted that the anniversary Mass will take place 160 years to the day after the first Ss. Peter and Paul Church was dedicated. The current church — the parish's third — was erected in 1911.

In addition to the June 29 celebra-

tion, Sister Flass said, "We've been having events throughout the year, commemorative kinds of events. We will continue to do that."

Ss. Peter and Paul was founded as a parish for German immigrants and later served mostly Italian families. Today the parish offers several neighborhood outreach programs such as St. Peter's Kitchen and PriceLess Clothing, which offers free clothing.

Those interested in attending the anniversary brunch should call 585/436-3110.

— Mike Latona