

India prepares for beatification

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS) — As the Oct. 19 beatification of Mother Teresa approached, Catholic leaders marked the sixth anniversary of her death and reflected on the Nobel laureate's legacy.

Pope John Paul II said Sept. 6 that Mother Teresa was a good example of modern missionary enthusiasm.

"The Apostle Thomas, St. Francis Xavier and Mother Teresa of Calcutta are but a few of the outstanding examples of the missionary zeal which has always been present in India," the pope told Indian bishops during their *ad limina* visits to the Vatican. Bishops make such visits every five years to report on the status of their dioceses.

During a Sept. 5 prayer service in Calcutta, India, marking the anniversary of Mother Teresa's 1997 death, Missionaries of Charity superior general Sister Nirmala Joshi, said the order still holds on to Mother Teresa's "dream to enter China."

The nuns have not been invited into China, but "it will happen," she said.

Sister Nirmala said the order continues to carry out Mother Teresa's work with leprosy patients, the destitute, abandoned people, children, AIDS patients and the sick.

She said that while no new initiatives have been started since Mother Teresa died the sisters have opened houses in 10 more countries — Algeria, Chad, Djibouti, Finland, Israel, Kazakstan, Mali, New Zealand, Norway and Thailand.

Archbishop Vincent Concessao of New Delhi, vice president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, told a Vatican news agency that the Indian bishops have asked Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to declare Oct. 19 a national holiday.

Archbishop Concessao told Fides, news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, that the holiday was appropriate because "Mother Teresa was loved and respected by all Indians for her work among the poor."

The bishops' conference encouraged the prime minister to send a government delegation to Rome for



Reuters/CNS

Orphans gather with members of the Missionaries of Charity for special prayers at the tomb of Mother Teresa on the sixth anniversary of her death.

the ceremony "as this is a great occasion for every Indian," not just Catholics.

The bishops also asked the government "to celebrate the great event by instituting a national award for social workers in honor of Mother Teresa." The award would inspire others "to live a life dedicated to the poorest of the poor," the bishops said.

The archbishop said the bishops are waiting for a response regarding the holiday, as well as authorization

for the state-run television network to broadcast the beatification ceremony live from the Vatican.

In the meantime, each of India's bishops has been encouraged to work for local proclamations of an Oct. 19 holiday and for local broadcasts of the ceremony.

New Delhi officials plan to rename Wellington Crescent Road in the capital as "Mother Teresa Road" and to erect a statue of the nun at one end of the street.

Judge dismisses cases

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

After government witnesses failed to appear in Rochester City Court, Judge Ann Pfieffer dismissed trespass charges Sept. 3 against four protesters arrested during a March 5 sit-in at Rochester's Federal Building.

The protesters — part of a mostly Catholic group known as the "Ash Wednesday 13" — were Mercy Sister Grace Miller and Rita Lewis, both of Rochester's House of Mercy outreach center; Jessica Chapman, a staff member of the Rochester Catholic Worker shelter St. Joseph's House of Hospitality; and Gail Mott, a member of Rochester's Downtown United Presbyterian Church.

The demonstrators had been arrested after refusing to leave the Federal Building's entrance as part of their protest against the then-looming war in Iraq. In addition to the House of Mercy and St. Joseph's, protesters are affiliated with such Catholic organizations as the peace group Pax Christi Rochester.

Two Rochester police officers and a federal marshal were to appear at the Sept. 3 trial, according to de-

fense attorney Donald Thompson. One of the officers said he couldn't appear because of firearms training, Thompson said. No reasons were given for the absence of the other two witnesses.

Thompson said he was prepared to argue that the protesters had a legal right to be in the entranceway, and that a videotape of the demonstration would have shown they did not block anyone from entering the building.

Two other protesters settled their cases earlier this year and were ordered to pay fines and court costs. The remaining protesters are slated to be in court Oct. 16 or Oct. 27, according to Pax Christi Coordinator Jan Bezila.

Both Mott and Chapman expressed mixed feelings about the dismissal of their cases, noting that they would have liked the opportunity to make their cases. In a statement, Chapman noted that she had felt compelled to speak out against the war.

"Going to the Federal Building on Ash Wednesday to pray for repentance was not enough to stop the war, but it was the least I could do," the statement said.

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House

Carol Zimmer

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