

Pontiff beatifies Slovakian martyrs

John Thavis/CNS

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia — On a trip that taxed his fading physical powers, Pope John Paul II crisscrossed Slovakia to celebrate liturgies, beatify two 20th-century martyrs and offer a message of hope.

He had trouble delivering that message personally, however. Weakened by infirmity, he had to let others read long sections of his prepared speeches and homilies during the Sept. 11-14 visit. He could not stand or walk, and his difficulties left many wondering if the pope would continue to travel.

The centerpiece of the pope's visit was a closing Mass in Bratislava to beatify Bishop Vasyľ Hopko and Sister Zdenka Schelingova, both of whom died after suffering years of prison and torture from communist authorities.

Wheeled on a mobile throne, the 83-year-old pontiff celebrated the liturgy before an estimated 100,000 people in the city's Petržalka suburb, planned decades ago as a model neighborhood by the communist regime.

In a sermon read in part by Slovak Cardinal Jozef Tomko, the pope said Bishop Hopko and Sister Schelingova had demonstrated that suffering

for the love of Christ, even to the point of martyrdom, can ultimately lead to new strength and hope.

When he arrived in Bratislava Sept. 11, the pope said it was important for Slovakia to preserve its Christian heritage and to make religious values felt throughout the continent when the country joins the European Union next year.

After meeting with civil authorities, the pope rode a popemobile 30 miles past well-wishers and roadside shrines to visit a cathedral in the ancient city of Trnava.

The pope traveled to Slovakia's heartland Sept. 12, celebrating Mass in the packed main square of Banská Bystrica.

At a Mass in the farming center of Roznava in eastern Slovakia Sept. 13, the issue of abortion took on a human face. Presented as an offertory gift during the liturgy were twin 3-year-old girls who were born conjoined at the waist and successfully separated a few months after birth.

Carrying dolls and holding onto their mother's hand, Lucia and An-



Reuters/CNS

Catholic nuns wait in the rain for the start of Mass with Pope John Paul II in Banská Bystrica in central Slovakia Sept. 12.

drejka Tothova walked up the altar steps for a blessing and a paternal pat on the cheek from the pope.

In spotlighting Lucia and Andrejka, local church leaders stressed the joy their mother would have missed if the girls had been aborted. Proposed legislation in Slovakia would extend the time of legal abortion to the 24th week of pregnancy in cases

of serious birth defects.

Before leaving the country Sept. 14, the pope offered equally simple counsel for young people. Saying they were the hope of the country and the "hope of the pope," he asked them not to be afraid to become "true friends of Jesus."

At the end of the Mass, pilgrims cheered the pope at length.

Fr. Thomas Driscoll; Rochester native

Obituary

Father Thomas F. Driscoll, 72, a priest in the Ogdensburg, N.Y., diocese for 43 years, died Aug. 29, 2003, at St. Cyril Rectory in Alexandria Bay, N.Y. His funeral liturgy was celebrated on Sept. 3 at St. Cyril Church with burial in the parish cemetery. Homilist was Father William J. Gordinier of Fairport, a classmate of Father Driscoll's at St. Andrew Seminary in Rochester.

Father Driscoll entered St. Andrew's from his home parish of Immaculate Conception in Rochester.

He then attended Wadhams Hall Seminary in Ogdensburg. Following additional studies, he was ordained in St. Mary's Cathedral, Ogdensburg, in 1960.

He received his master's degree from St. Michael's College in Vermont. In addition to his many pastoral assignments, Father Driscoll was a history professor at Wadhams Hall in the 1960s. He also was asso-

ciate director of communications for the diocese and served on its liturgical commission and finance council.

Predeceased by his sister, Dorothy Steeb, he is survived by his sisters, Elizabeth (Clyde) Marvel of Victor; Mary (William) Stevenson of Chicago; and Barbara (Kevin) Blakely of Chili; a brother, H. Joseph (Doreen) Driscoll of Rochester; and nieces and nephews.

A memorial Mass will be celebrated by Father Gordinier at Church of the Assumption, 20 East Ave., Fairport, on Sept. 23 at 7 p.m.

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