

## POPE NAMES NEW ST. LOUIS ARCHBISHOP

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope John Paul II has named Bishop Raymond L. Burke of La Crosse, Wis., as the new archbishop of St. Louis.

He succeeds Cardinal Justin Rigali, who was named archbishop of Philadelphia last summer.

Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, papal nuncio to the United States, announced the appointment in Washington Dec. 2.

## PRIEST SAYS MEDICARE PLAN, GOOD FIRST STEP

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Father Michael D. Place, president and CEO of the St. Louis-based Catholic Health Association, praised Congress Nov. 25 for its approval of legislation reforming Medicare but said more remains to be done.

He said that the reforms were "a much needed first step in providing a prescription drug benefit for seniors and ensuring access for Medicare beneficiaries by supporting our nation's health care providers."

But he reminded Congress that "their work in the area of health care reform is not complete."

"There still remain 43 million children, women and men without any health insurance who deserve and command our focus and support," Father Place said. "Congress, the administration and the American people must not rest until every individual has access to quality and affordable health care."

## THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sun., Dec. 7: Baruch 5:1-9; Psalms 126:1-6; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

Mon., Dec. 8: Genesis 3:9-15; 20; Psalms 98:1-4; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

Tue., Dec. 9: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalms 96:1-3, 10-13; Matthew 18:12-14

Wed., Dec. 10: Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalms 103:1-4, 8, 10; Matthew 11:28-30

Thu., Dec. 11: Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalms 145:1, 9-13AB; Matthew 11:31-15

Fri., Dec. 12: Zechariah 2:14-17; Revelation 11:19A, 12:1-6A, 10:1B, (6B); Judith 13:18BC; 19; Luke 1:26-38, 6; Luke 4:39-47 or 70-72

Sat., Dec. 13: Sirach 48:1-4, 9-10; Psalms 30:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; Matthew 17:9A, 10-13

# World AIDS Day observed

Patricia Zapor/CNS

WASHINGTON — From Washington to Dakar, Senegal, Catholic bishops joined in marking World AIDS Day Dec. 1 with promises of support for those with HIV/AIDS and encouragement to change behaviors that lead to the spread of the disease.

In Rome, Pope John Paul II and the head of the Vatican office for health care encouraged Catholics to join in praying and caring for people with HIV/AIDS disease.

And across Asia, Catholic organizations worked on AIDS prevention in China, India, Myanmar and Nepal.

In Dakar, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, which represents the bishops in Africa, issued its first collective statement on the topic of HIV/AIDS. It proposes a plan of action that involves work with parishes, other faiths, medical institutions and religious-formation programs. It focuses on changing behavior and accepting responsibility for tackling the complexities of the problems brought on by HIV and AIDS.

"We have also come to realize that poverty goes hand in hand with HIV and AIDS," they said. "It concerns us that our already fragile economies should be further weakened with much of the trained labor force lost to HIV and AIDS. Poverty facilitates the transmission of HIV, makes adequate treatment unaffordable, accelerates death from HIV-related illness and multiplies the social impact of the epidemic."

More than 11 million children in Africa under age 15 have been orphaned by AIDS, according to UNICEF. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, as many as 28 million people have HIV/AIDS, according to UNAIDS.

In Washington, two committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a joint letter urging fellow bishops to help mobilize the Catholic community and general public to fight the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Gordon D. Bennett, chairman of the Committee on African-American Catholics, and Bishop James A. Tamayo of Laredo, Texas, chairman of the Committee on Hispanic Affairs, said more than half of all new HIV/AIDS cases in the United States are among African-Americans, with 61 percent of those cases among teens. Hispanics account for 20 percent of the total reported AIDS cases, they said. And 78 percent of all cases of women with HIV/AIDS are African-American or Hispanic. African-Americans make up 12



Reuters/CNS

**A nurse cares for an AIDS-infected patient at a hospital in Guangzhou, China, Nov. 30. Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of World AIDS Day Dec. 1, called for prayer and education to prevent the spread of the pandemic disease.**

percent of the U.S. population. Hispanics account for 14 percent.

A report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates between 700,000 and 800,000 people in the United States are infected with HIV or have AIDS.

The letter from the two committee chairmen accompanied a packet of material sent to parishes nationwide encouraging priests to preach on the topic, suggesting that prayers address HIV/AIDS and asking Catholic communities and individuals to become active in organizations that care for people with AIDS.

In Memphis, Tenn., Bishop J. Terry Steib released a statement talking about his recent trip to visit five African nations where he "learned firsthand about the extent, severity and impact of the AIDS pandemic."

He told of meeting a young man and his grandmother who had been ostracized because of AIDS and of his visits to clinics where Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency, helps provide medical care for people with HIV/AIDS.

"AIDS requires us to open our eyes and not to dismiss this disease as 'someone else's issue,'" Bishop Steib said. "How can we as church allow a sister or brother to suffer alone because of the stigma and discrimination associated with this disease? Only by confronting the stigma and the discrimination will the

fight against HIV/AIDS be won."

CRS planned its first event to mark World AIDS Day with a program aimed at raising awareness planned for Baltimore's Walters Arts Museum. Among the guests expected for the event were actor Wendell Pierce of the HBO series "The Wire," who recently visited CRS-supported HIV/AIDS programs in Zimbabwe.

A group of religious leaders in Washington held a prayer vigil outside the U.S. Treasury building to link the spread of HIV/AIDS with crushing debt in some poor nations. Leaders scheduled to participate were to include Oblate Father Seamus Finn, vice chair of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, representatives of Jewish, Baptist and Methodist churches and the National Council of Churches.

An exhibit, "Signs of Hope, Steps for Change," featuring artwork from more than 23 countries about the stigma and discrimination felt by people with HIV or AIDS, opened in the visitors lobby of the United Nations in New York. It was co-sponsored by U.N. agencies as well as various church organizations.

Father Robert J. Vitillo, president of the National Catholic AIDS Network and head of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, was to be among speakers addressing how faith groups are challenged to speak out against AIDS-related discrimination and stigma.

In Rome, the pope used his midday Angelus address Nov. 30 to "pray for those struck by this plague," and to "encourage all those in the church who provide a priceless service of welcome, care and spiritual accompaniment to these brothers and sisters of ours."

Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, issued a special message Dec. 1 expressing the church's love for people with AIDS and their families and suggesting ways to fight the disease.

He called for wider access to generic medicines to fight the opportunistic diseases that kill patients weakened by AIDS and to medicines that help control the disease.

"The scandalous death rate in poor countries," where AIDS drugs are priced beyond the reach of most governments and patients, "cries to God for vengeance," he said.

UCA News, an Asian Catholic news agency based in Thailand, reported a series of stories about work being done by church organizations to fight HIV/AIDS in Asia.