



BRIEFS



SUDAN BISHOPS CONCELEBRATE MASS IN WASHINGTON — Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Adwok Kur of Khartoum, Sudan, and Bishop Rudolf Deng Majak of Wau, Sudan, concelebrate Mass in the chapel of the U.S. bishops' headquarters in Washington June 17. The bishops were in the U.S. seeking assistance to ensure that referendum on southern Sudan's independence is not derailed. (CNS photo by Bob Roller)

Referendum on independence must not be derailed: Sudanese bishops

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The planned January 2011 referendum on independence for Southern Sudan must not be derailed by political forces whose interests bypass human dignity, justice and peace, two Sudanese Catholic bishops said. In an interview with Catholic News Service June 17, Bishop Rudolf Deng Majak of Wau, president of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference, and Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Adwok Kur of Khartoum said the referendum established under the 2005 comprehensive peace agreement that ended decades of civil war must be assured by the United States and other nations. "It is in the best interest of everyone in the North and the South that the (peace agreement) is implemented to its logical conclusion," Bishop Deng said. "Our conviction is that ... there are people in the South and in the North who are undermining the basic understanding. We believe the people of America, the government of the people of the United States and all those who pressed that the (peace agreement) be signed and be endorsed in the first place, they should insist that things not go ... out of focus, and that extremists on both sides are not given a chance to derail this road map," Bishop Deng added. Southern Sudan's vote on self-determination is scheduled for Jan. 9.

Cardinal voices 'grave concern' over drug known to cause abortion

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The head of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities expressed "grave concern" about a drug labeled as an emergency contraceptive and the Food and Drug Administration's process for approving it. He said it was misleading to call it a contraceptive, as it is also known to cause abortions. In a June 17 letter to Dr. Margaret Hamburg, FDA commissioner, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston criticized the advisory panel's hearing that day on the drug. He said the hearing - held without broad public input or a full record on the drug's safety "for women or their unborn children"

- demonstrated a failure to understand the "new medical and moral issues" the drug presents. The drug, ulipristal, is being marketed under the brand name ellaOne or ella, and would be available only by prescription. The drug is said to prevent pregnancy five days after sex - two days longer than the morning-after pill known as Plan B, which is sold over-the-counter to women 17 and older. The FDA's advisory panel of 11 reproductive health experts voted unanimously for ulipristal's approval and called it safe and effective. In his letter, Cardinal DiNardo raised concerns that the new drug is more similar to the drug RU-486 - which can cause abortions several weeks into pregnancy - than it is to other emergency contraceptives, which are believed to have an effect on a fertilized egg after implantation in the uterus.



TRUCKS LOADED WITH PRODUCE PARKED AT GAZA BORDER — Trucks loaded with fruits and vegetables are parked at the Kerem Shalom border crossing after their arrival in the southern Gaza Strip from Israel June 17. Israel announced it was easing a land blockade of the Gaza Strip that drew heightened international criticism after its deadly raid on an aid flotilla bound for the Hamas-run territory. (CNS photo by Ibraheem Abu Mustafa, Reuters)

Gazans see lifting of blockade as only solution to dire conditions

JERUSALEM (CNS) — Only a total lifting of the Israeli-imposed blockade on the Gaza Strip will significantly improve the situation for Gazans, said the Jerusalem regional director of the Pontifical Mission of Palestine after a two-day visit to the beleaguered region. "The mood in Gaza is that really whatever sort of things are in the process to ease the blockade, they will not make a significant difference on their life," said Sami El-Yousef, who met with civil and religious representatives including those of several Christian organizations during his visit June 14-15. "What they are looking for is the lifting of the blockade. Otherwise, (Gazans) say, (easing the blockade) is just a joke unless it is completely lifted and there are no limitations put on the humanitarian supply," El-Yousef told Catholic News Service. Most Gazans believe U.S. President Barack Obama's recent pledge of \$400 million in aid to Gaza will have little impact on their situation, he added. After the May 31 raid on a flotilla that organizers claimed was carrying humanitarian aid but that Israeli officials believed to include Islamist extremists from Turkey, Obama urged Israel to limit the blockade to items that can be used to produce arms and to allow items through that could improve daily life and economic activity for Palestinians.

From the Vatican...

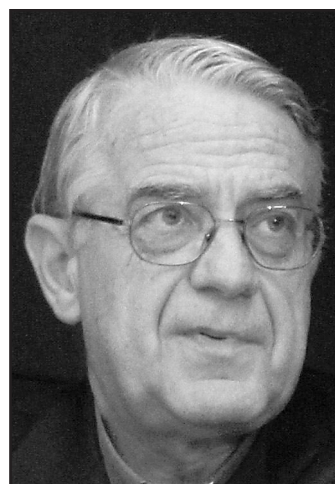


POPE ORDAINS 14 PRIESTS IN ST. PETER'S BASILICA — Men lie prostrate during their ordination to the priesthood by Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 20. The pope ordained 14 priests for the Diocese of Rome. (CNS photo by Paul Haring)

By Catholic News Service

A priest who seeks status rather than the will of God will be a slave to himself and to public opinion and will never discover how God wants to use his personal gifts and talents for the good of the church and the world, Pope Benedict XVI said. Being ordained a priest requires "the courage to say 'yes' to the will of another," knowing that God and the church will not erase his individuality, but will help him become all he can be, the pope said June 20, just before ordaining 14 new priests for the Diocese of Rome. The 14 men, who studied at four different seminaries in the city, promised the pope their fidelity, expressed their desire to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments and accepted celibacy as a way to consecrate themselves completely to God. As the congregation invoked the assistance of all the saints, the men laid face down on a rug before the main altar in St. Peter's Basilica. Then, one by one, they knelt before Pope Benedict as he placed his hands on their heads and ordained them to the priesthood.

Pope Benedict XVI appealed for an end to ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan and urged the international community to provide humanitarian aid to the civilian population in the Central Asian country. The pope's appeal came after several days of clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz left hundreds dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. Addressing pilgrims at the Vatican June 20, the pope pleaded for an end to the conflict and the re-establishment of peace and security in the country. "I invite all the ethnic communities of the country to renounce any provocation or violence, and I ask the international community to work so that humanitarian aid can quickly reach the stricken populations," the pope said. "To the relatives of the victims and to all those suffering in this tragedy, I express my heartfelt closeness and assure you of my prayers," he said.



The "sense of powerlessness and delay" in resolving the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history offers a lesson about the limits of technology, a Vatican official said. Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, said in a commentary June 19 that the leaking BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico was a disaster "of enormous proportions, and getting worse." He compared it to the 1984 chemical factory explosion in Bhopal, India, or the 1986 meltdown of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine. "What is

striking in this case is the sense of powerlessness and delay in finding a solution to this disaster faced by one of the largest and most technologically advanced oil multinationals in the world, but also by the most powerful country on earth," Father Lombardi said.

Pope Benedict XVI appealed for fair treatment of the world's refugees, saying they deserve to be welcomed with respect for their rights and human dignity. At the same time, the pope said, refugees should show respect for the identity of their host countries. He made the remarks at the Vatican June 20, which the United Nations marks as World Refugee Day. The pope said the annual day highlighted the plight of "all those who have been forced to leave their own land and family customs, arriving in environments that are often profoundly different. Refugees desire to find welcome and to be recognized in their dignity and their fundamental rights. At the same time, they intend to offer their contribution to the society that welcomes them," he said. "Let us pray that, in a just and mutual relationship, their expectations have an adequate response, and that they demonstrate the respect they feel for the identity of the community that receives them," he said.

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