

Rally attendees driven to 'confess their sins'

By Richard Morin and Scott Wilson=(c) 1997, The Washington Post

WASHINGTON - The men who gathered on the Mall Saturday to sing and pray were middle-age, middle-income family men struggling to deal with the changing role of women in society and conflicted about the role that the Promise Keepers should play in the political life of the country, according to a Washington Post survey.

These men were more sinners than saints: Their single biggest reason for coming to Washington was to "confess their sins," according to the poll. Most had done it before:

Two out of three said they had attended a Promise Keepers stadium rally. Many had traveled far to proclaim their spiritual failings. Fewer than one out of five were from the Washington area. Half came from somewhere in the South. More than four in 10 said they had journeyed to Washington by bus. A total of 882 randomly selected participants were interviewed for this poll. The margin of sampling error for the overall results is plus or minus 5 percentage points. The survey was conducted by a team

of 20 interviewers, who were dispatched throughout the Mall and selected participants to interview using methods similar to those used in election-night exit polls.

According to the survey, three out of 10 Promise Keepers said the biggest reason they came to Washington was to "confess and repent their sins" before God. One in five said they came to "show unity with other Christian men," and one in six said the biggest reason they participated was to "ask God to change my life."

The survey also found that many Promise Keepers were torn about the social changes affecting women in general and their wives in particular. Eight out of 10 rally participants were married, and the

overwhelming majority had children. Just over half agreed that it would be better if the "man worked and the woman stayed at home with the children."

But a majority of the married men with working wives also said that their wives' employment "hardly ever" conflicted with their family lives. And eight in 10 said their wives worked, at least in part, because "she wants to work."

Jack Bolton, 43, describes himself as an evangelical Christian. A department chief at Eastman Kodak

Co., Bolton did not complete requirements for his degree at Genesee Community College in Batavia, N.Y. His wife, Chris, works three jobs as a nurse, although he would prefer she didn't. But her paycheck is vital to raise three children, ages 14 to 19, on an annual household income of \$35,000.

"It's a strain," Bolton said. "I don't mind her working, but in an ideal world, she wouldn't."

Dennis Christner, 42 and married, a switchman in the rail yards for the Chicago Transit Authority, flew in Friday for the event. His flight, rental car and motel room were paid for by his church, the Rock River Christian Center, where he runs the men's ministry. He has attended six Promise Keepers rallies, including the group's first in 1992 in Boulder, Colo.

"I firmly believe in what they stand for- taking this country back, making the man the spiritual leader of the house," he said. "When the family breaks down, this nation is in bad shape. The way things are deteriorating now, it's only a matter of time before this country is totally destroyed."

Yet the survey suggests that most Promise Keepers believe that husbands and wives should share most family responsibilities equally.

Nine out of 10 said husbands and wives should "share equally" in doing the housework, disciplining the children and "making the big decisions." Two in three said a married couple should share equally in managing the household

finances. But a majority- 55 percent- said the husband should have the primary responsibility for providing financially for the family.

Promise Keepers are Republican and overwhelmingly conservative. Six out of 10 voted for Republican Robert J. Dole for president last year; one in eight voted for President Clinton. Two in three said they were "conservative" or "very conservative." Nearly two in three said they had a favorable impression of the religious right, though only 25 percent considered themselves a member.

Promise Keepers also are conflicted over the role the group should play in national politics. The survey suggests that members want the organization to stay out of partisan politics, but many would support the national organization's taking a lead role on such hot-button political issues as strengthening divorce laws, prohibiting gay marriages and using tax dollars to pay for private and religious schools.

Six in 10 said the group should not endorse a presidential candidate, and a similar percentage said it should not form a political action committee to donate money to Christian candidates.

But just as many say the Promise Keepers should take a position opposing gay marriages; four in 10 said the group should work to strengthen divorce laws.

After earthquake, Assisi is Quiet on St. Francis' day

By Vera Haller=Special to The Washington Post

ASSISI, Italy - This small Umbrian hill town where St. Francis founded his religious order in the 13th century is usually a hub of activity on this, the saint's name day. A procession weaves through the narrow streets, prayer vigils are held and the festivities, which thousands attend, culminate in a Mass in the magnificent white and rose stone basilica built in his honor.

This year is different. Assisi - one of the towns worst hit by a series of earthquakes in the past week - was practically a ghost town Saturday, its streets empty of tourists and religious pilgrims and the doors to the basilica closed.

"It's just awful to see Assisi dead like this," said Paolo Simonelli, who opened his gift shop on the street leading to the basilica but was finding no takers for his trinkets, which included porcelain figurines of St. Francis.

The earthquakes, two strong ones on Sept. 26 and a weaker one Friday, have caused widespread damage to Italy's central regions of Umbria and Marches. Two smaller aftershocks hit the area Saturday.

Eleven people died in the first tremors and at least 20 were injured Friday. Tens of thousands of residents whose homes were destroyed or damaged by the temblors are sleeping in tents and campers supplied by the government. Most of the homeless will probably be able to return home after engineers check the soundness of their buildings, but this process is expected to take weeks.

Assisi has emerged as a symbol of the pain caused by the earthquakes because of the damage sustained by the basilica of St. Francis. Huge chunks of the vaulted ceiling in the basilica's upper sanctuary collapsed on Sept. 26, killing four people inside, including two Franciscan friars. Its renowned frescoes, including a cycle of 28 paintings depicting the life of St. Francis by the Renaissance master Giotto, were damaged.

"It's a disaster. Parts of the frescoes are irreparable. There aren't just chunks of plaster, but tiny, tiny fragments which will be almost impossible to piece together. It's really seriously horrible," said Paolo Pastorello, one of about 40 art restorers who are volunteering their time to the restoration effort. They are still trying to sort out pieces of the frescoes from piles of debris, he said, organizing them as best as they can under tents set up outside the basilica.

The restorers, from all over

Italy, are sleeping in a tent city near Assisi. "They offered us housing, but we preferred to stay in the tents in solidarity with the residents and it's probably safer than staying in a house with all these earthquakes," said Alessandra Morelli, another restorer.

The Rev. Nicola Giandomenica of the Franciscan monastery attached to the basilica said the 52 friars living there were "deeply pained" by the week's events. "The pain is especially felt by the older friars who say they've never experienced a name day for St. Francis like this."

A few tourists could be found wandering the cobblestoned streets of Assisi. Lois Thompson and Joan MacDermid, of Melbourne, Australia, said they had been planning their trip for about a year and were not deterred after the first two earthquakes. "We wouldn't have come if we felt we were intruding on their tragedy, but we were assured by our hotel that we were not," Thompson said. The two women had been touring other parts of Umbria when the third earthquake struck Friday. "We're not frightened, but there is a woman in our hotel who said she was planning on sleeping in her clothes so she can make a quick escape if another one hits," MacDermid said.

Armida Frappini, a woman in her seventies, said she was the only person remaining in her building of the five families who lived there. She had brought a folding chair to the sidewalk to watch what little activity was going on in the street. "They (the other people in her building) have cars and can leave. I don't, so I have to stay. There is not even a church open, only one small chapel way up the hill where one can go to Mass."

While Assisi was blanketed in a strange quiet, a simple open-air Mass was said for St. Francis in front of the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli a few miles away. It was the only event held to mark the saint's name day; all other festivities were canceled as a sign of respect for those who died in the basilica.

The Mass, attended by several hundred people from the region, was offered by Archbishop Dionigi Tettamanzi of Genoa, whose diocese from the Liguria region donated a fresh supply of oil for the lamp that lights the tomb of St. Francis in the lower church of the basilica. A different region of Italy donates the oil each year. He and the other priests who officiated stood under a white tent.

"I think St. Francis would have been happy to be here today under a tent like all the other people," said a Franciscan friar attending the Mass who identified himself only as Father Paolo.

Japanese veterans confess to war crimes

By Sonni Efron=(c) 1997, Los Angeles Times

TOKYO - With a quavering voice, Yutaka Mio, 83, told a Tokyo courtroom last week of the atrocities he committed as a Japanese military police officer in Manchuria during World War II.

"I tortured him by holding a candle flame to his feet, but he didn't say anything," said Mio, identifying from sepia photographs two Chinese prisoners whom he tried to force to confess to being communist spies in 1941.

He told a three-judge panel that, despite doubts about their guilt, he handed them over to the notorious Unit 731, where they died as human guinea pigs in Japan's top-secret biological warfare program.

"I feel that I'm the one who murdered them," Mio said. He called on the Japanese government to apologize and pay \$826,000 to the bereaved families.

Dozens of geriatric Japanese veterans are at last beginning to unburden themselves of their war guilt, delivering confessional lectures and publishing books with such titles as "What We Did in China" and "The Hell I Fell Into." But Mio is the first to describe his atrocities in court, according to his lawyers.

Last week's legal scene was made possible by an extraordinary

collaboration between Chinese who claim they were victims of Japanese aggression and a group of Japanese lawyers and activists who believe Japan has yet to shoulder full responsibility for its war crimes and so are helping their aggrieved neighbors sue the Japanese government.

The Justice Ministry says that 38 civil lawsuits filed since 1991 by Chinese, Koreans and Filipinos, as well as by former prisoners of war from the United States and the other Allied countries, are working their way through Japanese courts. Several others have been dismissed as groundless.

The seven lawsuits by the Chinese victims or their families, all filed in the past two years, are the most ambitious, because they seek to

hold postwar Japan liable for the Imperial Army's most heinous deeds.

Plaintiffs include: Survivors of the estimated 40,000 Chinese dragged to Japan in 1941 as slave laborers; 6,630 are believed to have died after brutal treatment. Plaintiff Liu Lianren escaped from a Hokkaido coal mine and hid in the mountains for 13 years before he was discovered and repatriated to China. Ten Japanese corporations that employed the laborers are also defendants.

Civilians who survived Japanese massacres. In gripping testimony earlier this year, Li Xiuying, 77, who was seven months' pregnant

during the 1937 Nanking massacre (in the Chinese city now known as Nanjing), described being bayoneted in the face, neck, legs and belly by Japanese soldiers after she resisted their attempts to rape her. Her fetus was stillborn.

● Former "comfort women" who claim they were dragooned as sex slaves for the Japanese military.

● Families of people killed in Unit 731, in which prisoners were infected with diseases in germ warfare experiments and in some cases dissected alive, without anesthesia.

● Families of those who died after contracting bubonic plague, typhus and cholera, which were deliberately introduced among Chinese civilians by Unit 731 scientists to test the diseases as biological weapons.

● People killed or injured by chemical weapons and poison gas left behind in China by the retreating Japanese army, including some injured in the last several years when buried ordnance exploded during roadwork, river dredging and sewer repair. China says that 2,000 people have died from such causes since the war. Japan has pledged to build a facility in China to destroy leftover chemical weapons but, fearing a flood of claims, it has resisted calls for compensation to individual victims.

Given Japan's ponderous, conservative civil court system, the trials and appeals could drag on for years, if not decades, and the plaintiffs are deemed unlikely to win. But the Japanese activists say their goal is not to win damages but to create an indelible legal record of the historical truth that will be difficult for revisionists to deny.

"Young people do not know the truth, because it isn't taught in

schools," Mio said. "So we must educate the next generation."

So far, Japanese government defense lawyers have not disputed that any of the incidents described in the lawsuits occurred. All have been extensively documented by Japanese and Western historians-although many of the facts are disputed by the Japanese right wing.

But government lawyers plan to argue that Japan's 20-year statute of limitations has long since expired and that, in any event, Japan settled these issues when it paid China wartime compensation and resumed diplomatic relations 25 years ago, said Kaoru Tokuda, the Justice Ministry attorney supervising the defense.

Lawyers for the Chinese plaintiffs, noting that Nazi war criminals are still subject to prosecution in the West, maintain that no statute of limitations should apply to international war crimes. They assert that war reparations paid to nations should not preclude individual victims from suing those who wronged them.

Mio joined the military police at age 22 "because the salary was higher and I thought the uniforms looked sharp." He was assigned to gather intelligence on the anti-Japanese resistance in Dalian, China.

One of the first suspects he interrogated was an ethnic Korean woman suspected of working for a guerrilla group. "I kept beating her (with a wooden sword) until her skin broke and started to bleed, but she didn't answer my questions," Mio testified. The next day, he sexually assaulted her with the

sword. "Now, I regret this," he testified.

In 1943, Mio arrested Wang Yaouxuan, 46, the manager of a textile factory and a father of six, and his nephew Wang Xuenian, who had been named as friends of a suspected communist spy. Mio tortured the elder Wang to extract a confession. "I put him on a long desk and tied his hands and feet and put a handkerchief over his nose and poured water over his head," Mio said.

"When he couldn't breathe, he shouted, 'I'll confess!'" But since he

did not admit knowing the spy, Mio put a candle to his feet.

"I grilled them with the flame," Mio said in an interview. "I thought it was natural. I felt nothing. ... We did not think of them as people but as objects."

In 1944, Mio said he transferred the two Wangs, with two other suspects, to Unit 731, an organization so secret that even the military police had no idea what it did. "The only thing I knew about the unit was that nobody had ever come out of it alive," Mio said.

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