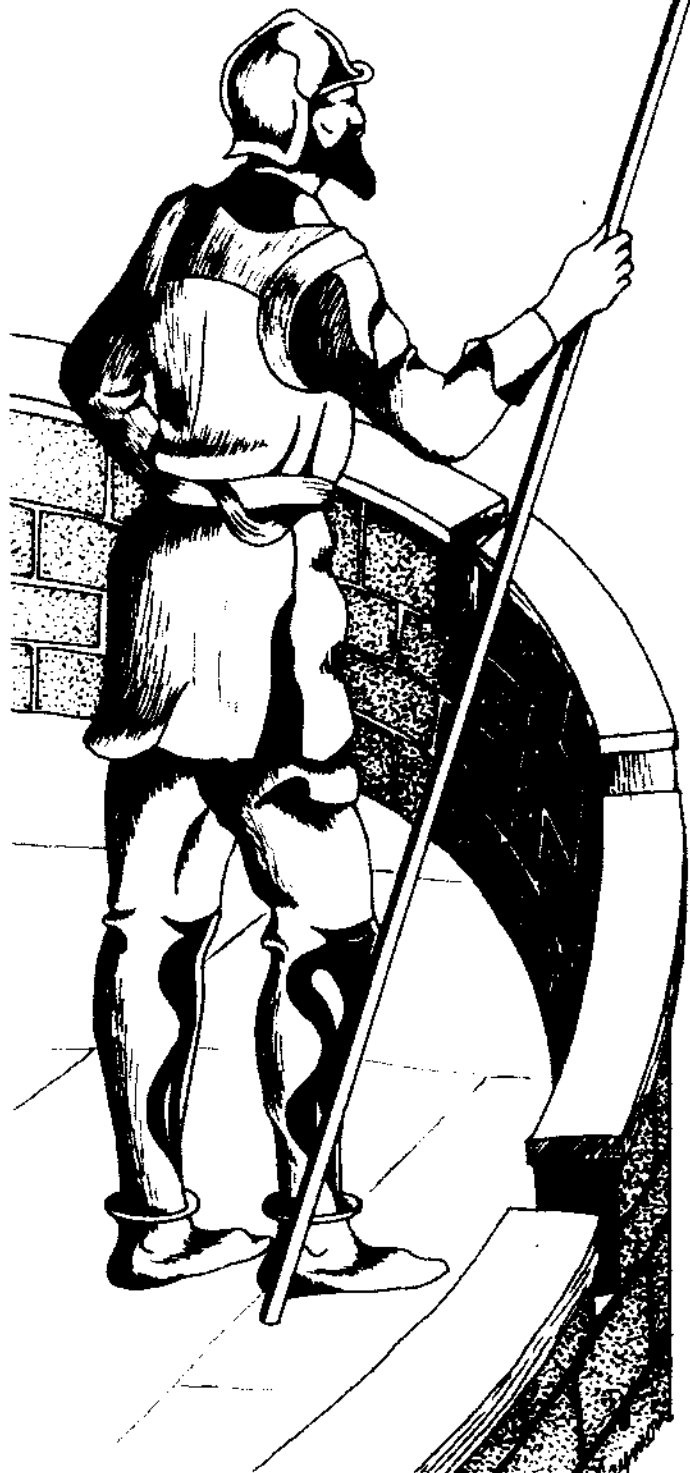


"Watchman,
what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



KEY ECUMENICAL EVENTS of 1997 in REVIEW

ADVENTIST CHURCH LEADER HEADS TRANSLATION TEAM OF
ECUMENICAL BIBLE FOR POLAND - SEE PAGE 7

Editor's Preface

This issue of *WMN* is a review of the ecumenical trends - statements and events - which have occurred during the year. Darren Lambert has gathered key facts as reported in the *ENI Bulletin*, a news release of the World Council of Churches. There is an intensity in the religious world, both within Protestantism and Catholicism, to achieve by the year 2000 or just beyond, a visible unity in some form. This was prophesied in the revelation given to John on the Isle of Patmos. (16:13-14,16) Due to our traditional understanding of the Seven Last Plagues, we fail to separate the plague itself from the reason God gives for pouring it out. For example, the first plague of "noisome and grievous" sores was afflicted on those who had received "the mark of the beast." The "mark" was received in probationary time; the plague fell after the close of all human probation. Likewise the sixth; the verses noted above refer to the reason why the plague, while Verse 12 gives the plague. Of interest, in *The Great Controversy*, after noting the intents of Satan, it is stated that he will achieve his objective "in the last remnant of time." (p. 561) Then the verses from Revelation 16 are quoted. What follows is a vital warning - "Except those who are kept by the power of God, through faith in His word, the whole world will be swept into the ranks of this delusion."

With Satan transformed into an angel of light and his ministers transformed as ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:14-15), the coming deception will be overwhelming. The arguments advanced will deceive, if possible, "the very elect."

At the International Eucharistic Conference in Poland, Pope John Paul asked a series of questions which are hard to answer for one opposed to the ecumenical movement. (See page 3, col. 2) The final question asked was - "Can we be reconciled with one another without forgiving one another?" During the year the Pope and Catholic Bishops asked forgiveness for atrocities against Protestants, including the St Bartholomew Day Massacre in 1572. (See three news items following the above question)

Ecumenical Review

1997

UNITY AT ALL COSTS!

London, 11 December, 1996

The Archbishop of Canterbury's official visit to Pope John Paul II last week has left relations between the Anglican and Catholic churches firmly on track, despite the issue of women priests, according to the Archbishop's secretary for ecumenical affairs, Canon Richard Marsh. Archbishop George Carey was with the Pope on five occasions in Rome last week. The Common Declaration issued by the Pope and Archbishop Carey at the end of their meetings acknowledges that the ordination of women as priests and bishops in some provinces of the Anglican Communion (there are eight Anglican women bishops) creates a "new situation". However, it urges moves to "continue and deepen our theological dialogue". The issue of women priests is, according to the Common Declaration, only one of several fundamental issues that stand between the two churches and "that full visible unity which is God's gift and our calling". Canon Marsh said that "we have some problems of our own" with Petrine primacy (the Pope's claim, as successor to St. Peter, to leadership of the church). Archbishop Carey had previously accepted the idea of a "historical primacy of honor" for the Pope, but has warned against unity talks based on the idea that the Roman Catholic Church is "somehow 'more church'" than other churches. ENI Bulletin - 96-0013

London, 28 May

Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, on 27 May used the pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral, the mother church of Anglicanism, to declare that moves toward Christian unity could not include renunciation of the primacy of the Pope. The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, spiritual head of the world-wide Anglican Communion, was in the congregation as Cardinal Hume recalled that in 1982 Pope John Paul had come to Canterbury as a pilgrim, "to plead for unity, not to cajole anyone into it". Echoing the Pope's 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Cardinal Hume said: "It is not the primacy as such that is open to debate, but the manner of its exercise. That is important. It does not threaten, and indeed should not." He added: "I trust that I am not abusing the privilege of preaching in this pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral." Cardinal Hume's sermon followed a service of the previous day by Archbishop Carey, in the presence of the cardinal and the Prince of Wales, where he made an appeal for reconciliation and unity between Christians. In his sermon, Archbishop Carey, the 103rd Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of the history of Christianity "littered with tragedy and division, the results of which remain with us today". He asked: "Can we, successors of Augustine's mission in this land, reach for a vision of reconciliation that will lead us to the unity which we know to be the will of God?" ENI Bulletin - 97-0244

London, 24 January

After centuries of difficult relations between Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, a shrine which honors the Virgin Mary but is part of a Scottish kirk (church) might seem to be the ultimate ecumenical fantasy. It is, however, a reality at St. Mary's Kirk, Haddington, 30 kilometres from Edinburgh, where the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) minister, Clifford Hughes, describes the adjoining Marian chapel, as "a marvellous working demonstration of ecumenical unity". Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics use the Marian chapel and, each week, an Anglican eucharist and a Roman Catholic mass are celebrated in the chapel, whose centerpiece is a handsome modern wood carving of Mary. The rector at Haddington, Ian Paton, acknowledges there are "tensions" surrounding the pilgrimage, when many hundreds of pilgrims converge on the church and chapel in the name of Our Lady, bringing more than a whiff of Rome to the highly Protestant Scottish lowlands. "A major event of the pilgrimage is a Roman Catholic mass in the kirk," Paton told *ENI*. "Locals see this happening in their own church, and yet they are not able to take the communion. Some people have difficulties with that." However, Paton believes that the pilgrimage does far more good than harm. He is particularly keen on the prayer focus on healing - of individuals, nations and the divided Church itself - and notes with approval that increasing numbers of Presbyterians and Orthodox Christians are being drawn in. ENI Bulletin - 97-0031

Geneva, 11 April

The spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople, has called on the Roman Catholic Church to join the World Council of Churches in time for the WCC's 50th anniversary next year. The WCC has 332 member churches around the world, among them the world's main Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches. However the Roman Catholic Church, whose 850 to 900 million members makes it the world's biggest church, is not a WCC member, although there is co-operation between the WCC and the Vatican on a number of issues. The call by Patriarch Bartholomeos - with its reference to the WCC's 50th anniversary - takes on a particular significance because the WCC is engaged in a wide ranging review of its activities and structure. The WCC describes this process as a search for Common Understanding and Vision (CUV). The WCC's general secretary, Dr. Konrad Raiser, has in the past appeared to rule out the possibility of the Roman Catholic Church joining the WCC. After meeting the Pope in 1994, he said that the different structures of the Roman Catholic Church, which is organised at the world level, and the WCC, which is a fellowship of nationally-organised churches, made it difficult to imagine the Roman Catholic Church in WCC membership. However, Dr. Raiser has also strongly affirmed the need to find new "models" which would allow the Roman Catholic Church to take its "natural place" in the ecumenical movement. One idea suggested by Dr. Raiser, which has been taken up in a first draft document on the CUV process and sent to WCC member churches, is that the WCC could help create a new ecumenical forum which could include the Roman Catholic Church and other churches which are not WCC members. Patriarch Bartholomeos strongly reaffirmed his commitment to ecumenism saying: "Everyone who declares him-

self against the goal of full Christian unity stands against God's will." He also hoped that the Second European Ecumenical Assembly of Europe's Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican churches, to be held in Graz, Austria, in June this year, would "move all Churches further along the path to reconciliation". ENI Bulletin - 97-0140

Graz, Austria, 30 June

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Milan and possible successor to Pope John Paul II, has given his cautious backing to a proposal for a universal church council to resolve differences, such as disagreement over the papacy, which divide the main churches. The Cardinal's remarks differ from those of another prominent Roman Catholic leader, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Earlier this month, Cardinal Ratzinger told a press conference in Rome that only the "Petrine principle" (the Roman Catholic doctrine that the Pope is the legitimate head of the Christian Church), and not "conciliarity" could restore the unity of the whole church. To consider any other path than the Petrine principle was, according to the cardinal, "a romantic, unrealistic dream". ENI Bulletin -97-0295

London, 24 July

A forum of church representatives from England has called for the establishment of a permanent theology group to iron out points of doctrine standing in the way of Christian unity. Canon Martin Reardon, general secretary of Churches Together in England (CTE), which organised the forum, said, "Even the apparently sharpest differences of theology were not insoluble." "Christians will probably be divided on theology until kingdom come, but not about the same things," he told ENI. "Once it was the nature of the Trinity, then at the Reformation the nature of the sacraments, and now it's women priests." Cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Westminster, referring to previous meetings of the ecumenical forum, said in his closing remarks: "In 1987 and 1990 we went to watch one another praying; now we pray together. In 1987 and 1990 we were very polite to each other; now we are friends." Another key idea from the forum is for the year 2000 to be marked with "some public expression of reconciliation, repentance, and renewal between the churches". "The idea is to express in public the unity we already have," Canon Reardon said. The end of the first millennium, he said, had produced division, so it was especially right that the end of the second millennium should produce unity. ENI Bulletin - 97-0343

Hong Kong, 11 July

The Vatican's leading authority on ecumenism, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, today rejected suggestions that there were insurmountable barriers which meant that Roman Catholics and Lutherans would never be able to share the Lord's supper and restore full links between these two major Christian families. Cardinal Cassidy was asked by ENI at a press conference in Hong Kong whether the fact that most Lutheran churches ordained women, while the Pope had declared that the Roman Catholic Church would never ordain women, would prevent - forever - communion between the Catholic and Lutheran traditions. Cardinal Cassidy responded: "My reaction is always that this [work for the unity of the church] is not only our work. Our Lord is calling

us, and we are not engaged in protecting ourselves. The grace is coming from God." Cassidy praised major progress in Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, which is close to resolving the theological question of justification by faith, which has been a key difference between the two traditions since Martin Luther broke with Rome in the 16th Century. H. George Anderson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said that the progress on the issue of justification "offers a new paradigm, a new way of looking at things" between the two churches. When such an agreement was reached, sometimes other differences melted away, he suggested. Christoph Stier, the former Lutheran bishop of Mecklenburg, Germany, said: "Basic agreement on the doctrine of Justification can provide a basis for new mutual relationships ... To put it figuratively, a large, previously insurmountable stone which has blocked the way to unity for such a long time will be moved aside.... In the future, no one will be able to argue that we can make no progress along the path to communion between the churches because this obstacle is blocking the way. And then further steps can and must be taken along this path." ENI Bulletin - 97-0324

RECONCILIATION WITH A "BEASTLY" APOLOGY

Warsaw, 2 June

Pope John Paul II has made an impassioned appeal for ecumenical unity at the start of an 11-day pilgrimage to his native Poland. Addressing the International Eucharistic Congress in the southern city of Wroclaw on 31 May, the Pope said there could be "no turning back on the ecumenical path". He said that he was asking Roman Catholics and members of other churches for a new "joint Christian witness". "The future of evangelisation is linked to the witness of unity given by Christians", he told the conference. "In recent years, the distance separating churches and ecclesial communities from one another has diminished significantly. But it is still too great!" the Pope said. "Can we be fully reconciled with Christ without being fully reconciled among ourselves? Can we bear joint and effective witness to Christ if we are not reconciled with each other? Can we be reconciled with one another without forgiving one another?" ENI Bulletin - 97-0237

Rome, 20 February

Italy's Roman Catholic bishops have taken the unprecedented step of asking forgiveness for the "suffering and injury" inflicted on the country's Protestant minority over the centuries. Italy's Waldensian Church, whose roots go back to the 12th century, is the oldest Protestant Church in the world. The appeal was made on Sunday, 16 February at a service held in one of the biggest Waldensian churches in Rome, less than a mile from the Vatican. During the service, Archbishop Giuseppe Chiaretti of Perugia, read a message from the Italian bishops committing themselves "to begin in earnest to work for the reconciliation of memories ... to accept the burden (of history) and salve the wounds of memory by recognising their existence and, when necessary, by forgiveness asked and given". The event was attended not only by many Protestants, but also by Catholics, Jews and Muslims who had just ended a three-day meeting at the nearby Waldensian Faculty of Theology. Writing in Italy's main Protestant newspa-

per, *Riforma*, the Waldensian theologian Paolo Ricca described the moment chosen by the Italian bishops for "their courageous gesture" as "highly symbolic". The service to mark the date of 17 February, 1848, is when "Waldensians give thanks to God for not allowing the Catholic Church and the powers in its service to wipe them off the face of the earth." ENI Bulletin -97-0064

Prague, 28 April

Pope John Paul II has issued an appeal - in a part of Europe with an ancient history of violence between Catholics and Protestants - for charity, forgiveness and a renewal of the "longing for unity". The Roman Catholic leader was speaking at an ecumenical service in Prague's St Vitus Cathedral during a 48 hour visit to the Czech Republic. "In charity we can together ask God for forgiveness and find the courage to pardon one another for the injustices and mistakes of the past, no matter how serious and offensive they were. We must bring down the reciprocal barriers of suspicion and distrust so that we can build a civilisation based on love." The Pope reminded the congregation that two years ago he had, "in the name of the Church of Rome, asked pardon for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics, and at the same time I gave assurances of the Catholic Church's forgiveness of the sufferings which her children have undergone." The Pope also paid tribute to the work of an ecumenical commission examining the condemnation of Jan Hus, the Bohemian reformer who was burned at the stake in 1415 as a heretic. It was necessary, Pope John Paul said, to examine without prejudice, "all those events, still insufficiently understood, which led in the past to the disorder and excesses between those who belonged to the community of the Reformation and the Catholics". The Pope also spoke of his hope that churches and Christians would be able to make a renewed effort for unity for the new millennium. The experience of the annual world-wide Week of Prayer for Christian Unity made "the yearning for a common Eucharist still greater", he said. ENI Bulletin -97-0203

Paris, 25 August

Pope John Paul II left Paris yesterday at the end of a triumphal four-day visit which attracted interest well beyond the organisers' expectations, and praise from Protestants who welcomed reconciliatory remarks by the Roman Catholic Leader. At a vigil service at Longchamp on the evening of Sat. 23 August, the Pope directly replied to criticism of the timing of his visit, which coincided with the 425th anniversary of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre on the night of 23-24 August 1572, when, on the orders of the Roman Catholic monarchy, thousands of French Protestants were killed. The Pope told the Longchamp crowd of between 600,000 and 800,000: "We cannot forget the sad massacre of St Bartholomew's Day, an event of very obscure causes in the political and religious history of France. Christians carried out acts which the Gospel condemns. Belonging to different religious traditions must not constitute a source of opposition and tension. On the contrary, our common love for Christ impels us to seek tirelessly the path of full unity." The French Protestant Federation welcomed the Pope's comments. ENI Bulletin -97-0405

New York, 20 August

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), voted at its Churchwide Assembly in Philadelphia on 18 August to declare full communion with three US denominations in the Reformed (Calvinist) tradition - the Presbyterian Church, Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. On the same day, the Lutherans failed narrowly to approve a similar "Concordat of Agreement" with the Anglican Church. However, the assembly approved resolutions leaving the way open for full communion with the Anglicans to be approved at the next assembly in 1999. The agreements allow for full acceptance of clergy and sacraments of the partners, and denial of doctrinal differences sufficient to justify church division. ENI Bulletin -97-0379

Graz, Austria, 30 June

The biggest and most representative gathering of European Christians this century finished on 29 June with an open-air service attended by thousands of people. The official church delegates adopted a "message" calling for the "unflinching pursuit of the goal of visible unity" and the "unequivocal proclamation and defence of human rights". The president of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) John Arnold, told ENI that the Graz assembly had not brought the "visible unity" of the church closer "in the strict faith and order sense of the word" as the assembly was not intended to be a theological dialogue. "We haven't been able to make our unity visible at the point when people would see us all taking communion together," he said. "However, at another level we have made visible the unity of very great diversity ... the worship occasions ... have had a quite extraordinary visibility which shows that short of full visible unity there is still a visible unity which is very well worth having." Many participants, particularly those from Protestant churches in Western Europe, wanted the assembly to make clear proposals on issues such as sharing the Eucharist across denominations ... ENI Bulletin -97-0299

Leipzig, 23 June

Germany's Protestants and Roman Catholics have decided to organise a major ecumenical gathering in the year 2003 - and they hope that the event will include a joint eucharist for Christians from both traditions. According to Professor Hans Joachim Meyer, president of the central committee of German Catholics ... both Protestants and Roman Catholics had a "common experience that the separation at the Lord's Table is especially painful." According to Rainer Meusel, president of the Protestant Kirchentag (church convention) there is a "clear desire for greater unity between the two major Christian confessions in Germany". But he stressed that carefully prepared discussions between Protestants and Roman Catholics were needed if the aim of a joint eucharistic celebration was to be reached. ENI Bulletin -97-0281

JERUSALEM

Rome, 4 February

Pope John Paul II will almost certainly make an official visit to Jerusalem, following an invitation on 3 February by the Israeli Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu told reporters

EUCHARIST AND/OR COMMUNION

that the Pope intended to accept his invitation to visit Israel. He made the announcement after a 20-minute meeting with the Pope at the Vatican. Although the Vatican did not confirm that the Roman Catholic leader will visit Jerusalem, Netanyahu told the Pope at the end of their meeting that he eagerly awaited the Catholic leader's visit. Pope John Paul replied: "God bless Israel." Netanyahu later told journalists that the Pope intended to come to Israel before the year 2000. The Vatican has for some time been planning for the Pope to visit Israel as part of celebrations for the start of the new millennium. ENI Bulletin -97-0056

Jerusalem, 27 March

The Latin Patriarch, Michel Sabbah, who is the Roman Catholic (Latin) archbishop of Jerusalem, said the "Holy City of resurrection and redemption is still the main cause for the absence of peace. Everyone believes Jerusalem is the city of peace, yet it remains the source of disputes. It is still, for security reasons, forbidden for our believers." The Patriarch and the Custos of the Holy Land, Giuseppe Nazzaro both agreed that the peace process was in trouble. "We encourage our faithful to pray for peace, but they see no evidence of peace," Nazzaro said. "Still, Christians must believe in peace and work for peace." The Latin Patriarch reiterated a plea for Jerusalem to have "a unique and special status which guarantees its holiness and sovereignty alike. God wanted this city to be a holy heritage for the three monotheistic religions. The principle of sharing this city is the only way to peace." ENI Bulletin -97-0138

GENERAL

Warsaw, 20 February

Poland's churches hope that the first part of an ecumenical Bible will mark a major step towards overcoming confessional divisions. The 109-page edition of St Matthews Gospel, signed by representatives of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Reformed churches, was presented at a ceremony organised by the Polish Bible Society in Warsaw on 17 February. Barbara Enholm-Narzynska, the director of the society, said the translation had been "readily accepted" by church leaders. She added that it was hoped a full ecumenical Bible would be published by the year 2000. "Although minority churches already enjoy good mutual relations here, real ecumenism in Poland can begin only when Roman Catholics are involved," she told ENI. The translation of St Matthews Gospel was undertaken by a team headed by Zachariusz Lyko, leader of the country's 10,000-member [Seventh-day] Adventist church. The team expects to publish St Mark's Gospel in May. Barbara Enholm-Narzynska told ENI that ecumenical translations had a "special dimension" in Poland, where 95 per cent of the population of 38.5 million identify themselves as Roman Catholics. ENI Bulletin -97-0074

London, 19 February

A Church of England bishop has joined millions of Christians around the world by "giving up" something for Lent. But Dr Alan Smithson, Bishop of Jarrow, has made an unusual choice for his Lenten sacrifice - he has given up reading the Bible and has taken up the holy Muslim book, the Koran, instead. "If only Christians would take seriously the beliefs of other traditions and religions, we would be all the better for it," Bishop Smithson told

reporters. "I am passionately concerned that we help the church to move into a wider scene where we are not just preoccupied with Christian issues, but understand other faiths, not as rivals, but as fellow travellers. The western world needs to learn from Islam. There are qualities of holiness and commitment that the faithful Muslim shows that the Western world can learn from."

ENI Bulletin -97-0071

New York, 28 August

A museum and study centre designed to focus international attention on papal teachings and the impact of Roman Catholicism world-wide is to be constructed in the US capital, Washington DC. The centre is expected to draw half-a-million visitors a year and also to provide facilities for visiting scholars. The Pope John Paul II Cultural Centre is due to open in 2000, a year the Pope hopes will bring renewed commitment to the Christian faith and the mission of the church. Pope John Paul II suggested that the centre be located in Washington DC because of the US capital's leading role in world affairs. While the museum and research facilities were directed towards learning, the centre was also intended to serve the papal goal of evangelisation. ENI Bulletin -97-0381

Warsaw, 4 June

Pope John Paul II has called on his fellow Poles to "beg God on [their] knees" that he will live to lead the Roman Catholic Church into the next millennium. "My years are adding up," the 77-year-old Pontiff said to worshippers. "So you must beg God on your knees that I cope with this task." In response, the crowd of 400,000 chanted: "We will help you." ENI Bulletin -97-0238

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