

Storm Victims Pour Into Churches To Mourn

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Macolee Muhammed accepted the prayer of a relief worker who stopped by what was left of her Birmingham home. It didn't matter that she was Muslim and he was a Southern Baptist.

"If you came here to help, the only person who sent you was God," she said.

The storms that roared across the South last week flattened churches and crushed the homes of pastors and parishioners in a ragged stretch from Mississippi to Virginia. At least 342 people were killed and thousands more hurt.

So on the first Sunday after the disaster, believers streamed into houses of worship to give thanks for being spared, to mourn the dead and to ponder impossible questions. Why did some survive without any explanation? Why did others die for no apparent reason?

Many people in this highly religious region saw God at work, even amid the devastation.

Pope Beatifies John Paul II In Front Of 1.5 Mil

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Some 1.5 million pilgrims flooded Rome Sunday to watch Pope John Paul II move a step closer to sainthood in one of the largest Vatican Masses in history, an outpouring of adoration for a beloved and historic figure after years marred by church scandal.

The turnout for the beatification far exceeded even the most optimistic expectation of 1 million people, the number Rome city officials predicted. For Catholics filling St. Peter's Square and its surrounding streets, and for those watching around the world the beatification was a welcome hearkening back to the days when the pope was almost universally beloved.

"He was like a king to us, like a father," Marynka Ulaszewska, a 28-year-old from Ciechocinek, Poland, said, weeping. "I hope these emotions will remain with us for a long time," she said.

Pope Benedict XVI praised John Paul for turning back the seemingly "irreversible" tide of communism with faith, courage and "the strength of a titan, a strength which came to him from God."

John Paul is universally credited with helping bring down communism in his native Poland with support for the Solidarity labor movement, accelerating the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Obesity Battle Escalates Amid Stigmatization

NEW YORK (AP) — The images are striking: Overweight boys and girls staring somberly from billboards and online videos, real-life embodiments of the blunt messages alongside.

"Chubby kids may not outlive their parents," for example. Or: "Big bones didn't make me this way. Big meals did."

The ads — part of a new "Stop Child Obesity" campaign in Georgia — won some enthusiastic praise for their attention-grabbing tactics. But they also have outraged parents, activists and academics who feel the result is more stigma for an already beleaguered and bullied group of children.

"Billboards depicting fat kids are extraordinarily harmful to the very kids they are supposedly trying to help," said the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, which called for the billboards' removal.

The Georgia Children's Health Alliance, which created the ads, said they were necessary to jar parents of obese kids out of a state of denial that their children had a problem.

'Fast Five' Races To A Furious \$83.6 M Start

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Fast Five" has left the competition in the dust with an \$83.6 million debut to grab the No. 1 spot at the weekend box office, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Universal Pictures' fifth movie in "The Fast and the Furious" franchise was by far this year's biggest opening. Its take was more than double the previous best of \$39.2 million for "Rio," the 20th Century Fox animated hit that slipped to No. 2 with \$14.4 million.

The No. 1 movie the two previous weekends, "Rio" raised its total to \$103.6 million.

"Fast Five" set a record for best April debut ever, speeding past the \$71 million haul of its predecessor, "Fast & Furious," two years ago.

OBITUARIES

Doris Novak

SCOTLAND — Funeral services for Doris Novak, 82, of Scotland are pending with Goglin Funeral Home of Scotland.

Doris passed away Sunday, May 1, 2011 at the Good Samaritan Society of Scotland. Online condolences may be sent at www.goglinfh.com.

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Steven Meyers

FORDYCE, Neb. — Steven Meyers, age 58, of Fordyce, Neb. passed away Friday, April 29, 2011 at Yankton. There will be no formal services at this time per Steven's request. The Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory is assisting with arrangements.

Steven is survived by his son James S. (Nicole) Meyers of Omaha, Neb. and his daughter Candace (Robert) Fitzler of Montrose. A brother Thomas (Dori)

Meyers of Yankton; special friend of 20 years Judy Bockholt of Fordyce, Neb. and his favorite cousin Colleen Meyers of Yankton. He was preceded in death by his parents James and Elaine (Sorenson) Meyers.

**Yankton Press & Dakotan
May 2, 2011**

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Online condolences at:
www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com

Josephine Kutilek

TABOR — Josephine F. Kutilek, 93, of Tabor died Sunday, May 1, 2011, at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Yankton.

Mass of Christian Burial is at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Tabor, with the Rev. Joe

Puthenkulathil officiating and Msgr. Carlton Hermann concelebrating. Burial will be in the parish cemetery.

Visitations is 5 p.m. Tuesday at Opsahl-Kostel Memorial Chapel, Tabor, with a wake service at 7 p.m. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the memorial chapel.

Supreme Court To Hear Corps Case

Mo. Seeks To Block Levee Blast, Flooding

BY JIM SUHR
Associated Press

CAIRO, Ill. — A legal fight over whether the Army Corps of Engineers should blast open a levee to relieve the rain-swollen Mississippi River went to the nation's highest court Sunday as the Illinois town the breach is meant to help during record flooding was cleared out.

As Missouri asked the U.S. Supreme Court to block the corps' plan, struggling Cairo near the confluence of Ohio and Mississippi rivers resembled a ghost town as Illinois National Guard troops went door to door with law enforcers to enforce the mayor's "mandatory" evacuation order the previous night.

About 20 to 30 families were allowed to stay — a courtesy extended only to adults — in the 2,800-resident town after signing waivers acknowledging that they understood the potential peril, National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Heath Clark said.

"If you're (possibly) losing everything and don't know where to go, you wouldn't want to leave, either," he told The Associated Press during a staging area in the Cairo High School cafeteria.

Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, the Corps officer in charge of deciding whether to breach the levee, on Sunday ordered field crews to move barges to the Missouri side of the river and begin loading pipes in the levee with explosives in anticipation of blowing up a two-mile section just downriver from Cairo. He stressed that the decision to do so has not been made.

Walsh said it would take 20 hours to get the pipes filled, during which time he will review conditions before deciding what to do. Destroying the levee would provide a relief valve to ease the menacing rivers and ultimately lower them, taking pressure off Cairo's floodwall and other levees father south along the Mississippi.

But the plan possibly would inundate 130,000 acres of now-evacuated farmland in Missouri's agriculture-reliant Mississippi County, causing what Missouri argues would crush that region's economy and environment by rendering that cropland useless under

potentially feet of sand and silt.

Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster, whose bid to derail the corps' plan in recent days included failed requests to a federal district judge and an appellate court, took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, noting "it is the responsibility of this office to pursue every possible avenue of legal review."

Corps officials are monitoring water levels and haven't decided whether to go through with the blast to blunt the rise of the Ohio, which on Sunday afternoon had risen to 59.93 feet at Cairo — eclipsing the 1937 record there of 59.5 feet. The river was expected to crest Tuesday at 61.5 feet and stay there for days, raising the corps' concerns about the lingering strain water that high could put on levees. Cairo's flood wall can handle 64 feet.

Sunday's house-to-house canvass came as more thunderstorms passed through the already waterlogged, rain-pummeled region — and as emergency-management officials in Cairo focused warily on a "sand boil" — an area of river seepage that's a potential sign of trouble — pooled to 40 feet wide and 12 feet deep about 100 yards from the floodwall.

Marty Nicholson, Alexander County's emergency management coordinator, said the boil was in check, resembling a doughnut surrounded by a mound of plastic-covered rock and sandbags.

"We've had sand boils before, but never this big," Nicholson said, noting that some 70 percent of the 9,600-resident county was flooded.

Just 17 miles from Cairo, near the tiny outpost of Olive Branch, Janice Bigham watched as her husband and volunteers desperately scrambled to heighten the sandbag wall that made their ranch-style home an oasis — safe for now — from the at times swampy green floodwaters that already had swallowed up many nearby homes and outbuildings without such defenses.

"All we can do is hope and pray that they blow that levee," said Bigham, 40. "That's the only thing that might take the pressure off; otherwise, the water will be over the road and wipe out Olive Branch."

Bigham, warning sandbaggers wading into the inundation to watch out for "big-time" snakes, said the gray-and-white brick home needed to be saved, given that her late father helped build it. "That's all I have left of him," she said before turning away briefly from a reporter, her chin trembling as ears welled in her eyes.

The flooding posed the latest challenge for Cairo and the rest of Alexander County, with a non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate naggingly around 12 percent as of March, 3 percent higher than the state's average. The cash-strapped county in recent years had several of its sheriff's cars taken back by the bank over unpaid bills.

Cairo has proud history, once serving as Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's headquarters in the Civil War's infancy before steamboats helped make it a vital transportation nexus.

By the 1920s, when 15,200 people called Cairo home, the city was a hub of commerce, thanks to rails and rivers, before its importance waned as the nation turned to interstate highways and air travel.

Matters worsened when a race riot erupted in 1967, fueling the exodus of employers and residents. The city has never recovered from it.

The riverfront now resembles an Old West stage set, its facades crumbling and windows boarded up. Some of the buildings are little more than heaps of bricks.

On Sunday, the city looked apocalyptic, its streets deserted of traffic that only included police cars. Prisoners loaded sandbags on an auto-parts business' lot, then loaded them in a fire-brigade fashion onto a dump truck under the watchful eye of guards. Churches that would have been overflowing that time of day were shuttered.

Saturated ground had given way under some streets, in one case leaving a crater about 8 feet deep near another stretch of buckled road.

Lauding the volunteerism and the orderly exodus from the city, Police Chief Gary Hankins figured Cairo would weather it all.

"This city has gotten a bad rap," he said.

"Like any situation of this magnitude, it's going to hopefully endear people to each other. Hopefully, this will prove our worth as far as coming together as a community."

Group Of Six Senators Hone Plan To Cut U.S. Deficits

BY ANDREW TAYLOR AND
STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of six senators is closing in on what could represent the best chance for tackling a deficit crisis that has forced the government to borrow more than 40 cents of every dollar it spends.

Their plan, still a work in progress, would reduce borrowing by up to \$4 trillion over the next decade by putting the two parties' sacred cows on the chopping block. Republicans would have to agree to higher taxes while Democrats would have to accept cuts in popular benefit programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and maybe even Social Security.

There is urgency to their work. Most Republicans and some Democrats in Congress have said they will not vote to increase the government's ability to borrow

without some action addressing the nation's long-term debt. The government is expected to reach its borrowing limit of \$14.3 trillion by mid-May. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner says steps are being taken to delay until July what would be an unprecedented default on the debt.

Geithner and a growing number of business leaders say a U.S. default would plunge the U.S., and perhaps the world, into a second economic crisis.

Despite opposition from top leaders in both parties, the Senate's Gang of Six is banking on support from many of the 64 senators who wrote President Barack Obama in March urging him to support a comprehensive deficit reduction effort.

The group includes four members of Obama's deficit commission, and its recommendations are expected to closely track the commission's plan for \$3 in

spending cuts for every \$1 in tax revenue increases over the coming decade.

Its other two Democrats are Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the second-ranking Democratic leader, and Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota, the Budget Committee chairman. The Republicans are Sens. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, Mike Crapo of Idaho and Saxby Chambliss of Georgia.

The six have met in private for several months, even as House Republicans and Obama developed more partisan plans that have little chance of being enacted into law because of Washington's divided government.

House Republicans passed a nonbinding plan in April that calls for reducing annual deficits by a total of \$6.2 trillion over the next decade. It includes no tax increases but calls for transforming Medicare from a program in which the government directly pays medical bills into a voucher-like system

Middle East Politics At Play In Passport Dispute

WASHINGTON (AP) — Menachem Zivotofsky was born in a Jerusalem hospital in 2002. Two months later, his mother showed up at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel, to get him a passport.

Menachem's parents, Ari and Naomi, were born in the United States so there was no question that he was American, too.

But when the mother asked that her son's passport and other documents indicate that he was born in Israel, State Department officials refused, citing longstanding U.S. policy to refrain from expressing an official view about Jerusalem's status. Israel has claimed the once-divided city as its capital; the U.S. and most nations do not recognize Jerusalem as the capital.

A lawsuit followed. The dispute over Menachem's passport, a mix of the thorny politics of the Middle East and a fight between Congress and the president over primacy in foreign policy, has landed at the Supreme Court. The justices could say as early as Monday whether they will hear the case.

Had Menachem been born in Tel Aviv, the State Department would have issued a passport listing his place of birth as Israel. The regular practice for recording the birth of a U.S. citizen abroad is to list the country where it occurred.

But the department's guide tells consular officials, "For a person born in Jerusalem, write Jerusalem as the place of birth in the passport."

Ever since President Harry S. Truman recognized Israel upon its

declaration of nationhood in 1948, no president has accepted permanent Israeli rule of the entirety of Jerusalem. Since Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War brought the entire city under Israeli control, U.S. policy has regarded the sensitive status of Jerusalem as something ultimately to be determined in talks between Israel and its negotiating partners. The U.S. Embassy remains in Tel Aviv.

After the Zivotofskys took their complaint to federal court in 2003, a judge refused to get in the middle of the dispute over Jerusalem's status. It was a political question, the judge said, for Congress and the president to work out without the intervention of the courts.

Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., has joined the family in urging the Supreme Court to hear the case.

HONORING THEIR MEMORY
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Our care and concern does not end with the funeral service. This week we remember with family and friends the anniversary of the deaths of:

Lyle W. Magorien
who passed away on
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Delmer Diede
who passed away on
May 2, 2003

Lawrence Waalloch
who passed away on
May 2, 2002

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