

# **POPE ASSAILS CRACKDOWN ON IMMIGRANTS / THE PONTIFF IS IN FRANCE. HE SAID WESTERN NATIONS HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION TO CARE FOR THE NEEDY.**

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## **Body**

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**Pope** John Paul II chastised **Western nations** yesterday for their **crackdowns** on immigration, declaring that the world's wealthiest **nations** have a **moral** duty to **care** for the **needy** regardless of their nationality.

"Who is my neighbor? The neighbor is every human being, without exception," the **Pope** told hundreds of bishops from around the world and about 6,000 others packed inside Notre Dame Cathedral for the beatification of a lay charity worker.

"It is not necessary to ask his nationality, or to which social or religious group he belongs. If he is in need, he must be helped," the **pontiff** said.

In Paris for the celebration of a Catholic youth festival, the **Pope** also set aside time yesterday for a private visit to the grave of a friend - a French geneticist who crusaded against abortion.

The **Pope** spent 12 minutes praying at the tomb of Jerome Lejeune, who in 1959 discovered the defect that causes Down syndrome, and later emerged as a fierce opponent of abortion.

All news media were banned from the **Pope's** visit to the cemetery at Chalo-Saint-Mars, about 40 miles southeast of Paris, where he was joined by Lejeune's relatives. The **pontiff** made no comment about abortion.

But abortion-rights groups and the French Socialist Party spoke out against the visit, the most hotly debated aspect of the **pontiff's** four-day visit to **France**.

"Such a step can only provoke uneasiness," the Socialists said in a statement. It "risks encouraging in our country the determination of those who are leading a battle marked by intolerance."

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls sought to play down any controversy, saying the **Pope** had visited the grave "for one reason only: personal friendship."

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Two months before Lejeune died in 1994, Pope John Paul named the scientist to lead the Pontifical Academy for Life, a group created to promote Catholic teaching against abortion. Lejeune also served on two other Vatican panels, including the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences.

The Vatican spokesman said that after visiting Lejeune's grave, the Pope got in a car to leave. But then he saw an empty country road and asked to get out to take a solitary stroll.

Earlier in the day, the Pope used his homily at Notre Dame Cathedral to challenge rising political pressure to crack down on immigrants in Europe, the United States and elsewhere.

During a three-hour ceremony beatifying Frederic Ozanam, a step just short of sainthood, John Paul noted that as the founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a charity active worldwide, Ozanam took up the cause of "those with no one to care for them."

"He understood that charity must lead to efforts to remedy injustice," the Pope said.

Several European governments, including France and Italy, are wrestling with the emotional question of what society owes immigrants.

In France, the far-right National Front party has gained ground with calls to expel immigrants, blaming them for rising crime and unemployment.

When the Pope left Rome on Thursday, Italian newspapers were filled with calls by conservative politicians for measures limiting immigration, following several recent sexual attacks on vacationers for which immigrants have been blamed.

## Graphic

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PHOTO

Pope John Paul II prays during a Mass at Evry cathedral outside Paris. The pontiff also prayed at the tomb of a friend yesterday. (Associated Press, DOMENICO STINELLIS)

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