

# RELIGION

## Differences Put Aside for Pope's Funeral

### Warring leaders shake hands

(AP)—Israel's president shook hands and chatted briefly with the leaders of the Jewish state's great enemies, Syria and Iran, during Pope John Paul II's funeral on Friday.

President Moshe Katsav greeted Syrian President Bashar Assad, who sat one row behind him during the service, and the Iranian-born Katsav said he spoke in Farsi to Iran's President Mohammed Khatami, just two chairs away as dignitaries gathered for the funeral were seated alphabetically.

The gestures were among several chance encounters as nearly 200 world leaders and other dignitaries gathered in front of the marble facade of St. Peter's Basilica for the



Israeli President Moshe Katsav (from left), Iran's President Mohammad Khatami, King Abdullah of Jordan, (left back to camera) and Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, attend a funeral mass for Pope John Paul II. (AP photo)

funeral, seated alphabetically according to the names of their countries in French, the language of diplomacy.

The seating order took on special

significance toward the end of the Mass when congregants were asked to greet each other in a Catholic tradition known as the "sign of peace."

Britain's Prince Charles, for example, took the outstretched hand of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, widely criticized for rights abuses, although his of-

fice later stressed he considers Mugabe's regime "abhorrent."

French President Jacques Chirac, who led the opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq, also shook hands with President Bush - of the Etats-Unis - and bowed to kiss the hand of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who smiled broadly.

Katsav said he first shook hands with Assad after turning to greet the nearby Swiss leader. "The Syrian president also stood there. We exchanged smiles and shook hands," Katsav told the Web site of the Maariv daily.

He said a second handshake occurred during Christian prayers when Assad "extended his hand to me and we again shook hands."

Syrian officials in Damascus refused to comment. But the Arab satellite station Al-Arabiya reported that a member of Assad's

delegation confirmed the handshake, though he also denied any political meaning.

Iranian officials also declined to discuss the reported encounter between Katsav, who was born in central Iran, and Khatami.

Katsav, who decided at the last minute to attend the funeral and upgrade Israel's representation, said that as he was leaving, "the Iranian president held his hand out to me. I shook his hand and greeted him in Farsi."

The men, who are roughly the same age, conversed about Yazd, the region where they were born, he told the television station.

Vatican officials, meanwhile, said they were satisfied at the mix of princes and presidents, saying the dignitaries clearly felt comfortable in a nonpolitical atmosphere.

## Unjust IRS Church Probes Alleged

### Congressman says black church groups targeted

Voicing concerns that outside groups may be specifically targeting black and other ethnic churches by triggering federal investigations, a African-American Congressman has asked the IRS to make public the number of predominantly black, Caucasian, Hispanic, and other ethnic churches that are presently the subject of Internal Revenue Ser-

vice investigations into their tax exempt status.

"Concerns have been raised that black churches in Florida have been unfairly and disproportionately singled out or targeted for government scrutiny because of routine church activities that have been a part of the African American community for generations," U.S. Rep.

Kenrick B. Meek said.

Meek said a letter from the IRS can have a chilling effect on churches.

"We need to be sure that the power of the government is being properly directed and not used to harass or intimidate," he said.

Under federal law, churches are tax exempt and therefore not permitted to participate in partisan political activities. It was recently reported that Friendship Baptist Church in Miami, FL is under investigation by the IRS because of a

visit by Sen. John Kerry along with black leaders, including Meek, last fall.

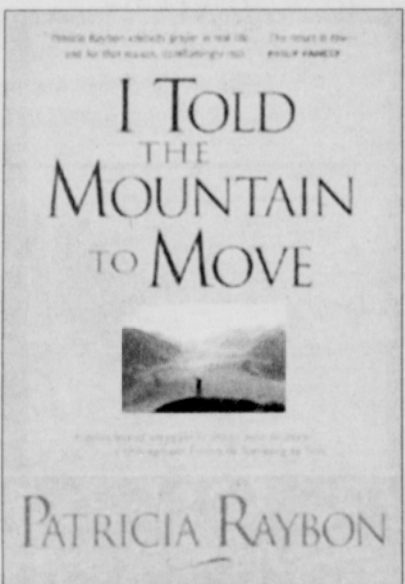
The First Baptist Church of College Hill in Tampa, was also under investigation for a visit by 2002 Florida gubernatorial candidate Janet Reno. Both churches serve primarily African American congregations. The IRS is also investigating the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People because of a July 2004 speech given by the group's chairman, Julian Bond.

## Journalist Learns Prayer Can Move Mountains

Patricia Raybon faced a mountain of discord: a strained 25-year marriage, conflict with two grown daughters, alienation from her aging mother and a troubling distance from a silent God.

Beset by such family and spiritual struggles, the author and journalist decided to enroll in the school of prayer. Her new book, "I Told the Mountain to Move," chronicles a life-changing education that takes her from the rote prayers of childhood to a mature understanding of her faith.

Her husband's sudden illness was the catalyst for Raybon's quest, but it was just one of several trials she faced. Others included her youngest daughter's conversion to Islam and the burden



Patricia Raybon

can church, had been going through the motions for years. Her prayers met with silence: "God was my Deus Absconditus the God who is hidden," she writes, "cold and distant, and as soundless as the grave."

So, Raybon vowed to learn to pray.

"But what did I know of the secrets of prayer?" she said. A former reporter, she was now a journalism professor at a state university, where the idea of praying to an unseen God "could get me laughed off campus, if not out of a job."

of secrets from her own past.

Raybon, 55, the daughter of devout Christians who raised her in a vibrant African-Ameri-

In her book, Raybon offers 24 lessons, such as Tell the Hard Truth and Serve with Love, that trace her transformation.

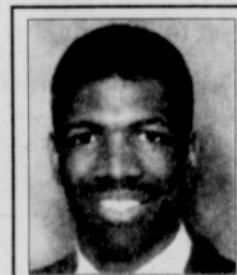
## Church Honors Pastor Edwards

Dr. Raymond H. Edwards Sr. of the True Vine Missionary Baptist Church will be honored for 15 years of service on Friday, April 15 at 7 p.m. The church celebration will be part of a weekend of events and special guests.

There will be a repeat honor ceremony at the church, located at 4735 N. Commercial Ave., on Sunday April 17, at 3 p.m.

A special banquet honoring the first lady of the True Vine Missionary Baptist Church in recognition of her 10-year celebration will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel, 1441 N.E. Second St., with keynote speaker Stephanie D. Glynn, a noted youth mentor and speaker.

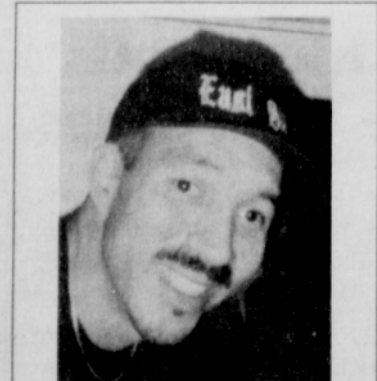
For more information, call the church at 503-335-3085.



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