

John Paul II: The Giant of the Age An Historic Visit to Rome

(Second of two parts)
A Nobel Peace Prize for
John Paul II

The Consistory during which the Pope created 30 new cardinals on Tuesday morning, Oct. 21, was not a Mass but a Liturgy of the Word. The 30 cardinals-elect processed in bright red choir robes to seats of honor in front of St. Peter's facing the Holy Father and over one hundred and fifty members of the College of Cardinals. The new cardinals came from around the world including one from the United States, Justin Rigali, the new Archbishop of Philadelphia, who ordained me a bishop in St. Louis. They ranged in age from 51 (Peter Erdo of Hungary) to 82 (Stanislas Nagy of Poland). A 31st was named "in pectore," meaning that his name was not announced. It was kept "in the heart" of the Pontiff to be revealed later or to die with him. The colorful red vestments of the cardinals remind many of the custom of calling cardinals "Princes of the Church." However, a more theologically sound interpretation of cardinal red (and the purple of bishops) is that all who wear them should be willing to shed their blood for the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Pope conserved his energy by having an assistant read the names of his new cardinals. He did present each with his red biretta and the pontifical letter appointing each cardinal to a titular church in Rome. This symbolizes that they are like parish priests of Rome, who, in days gone by, elected the Bishop of Rome. The next day during a Mass inside the Basilica, the new cardinals received their distinctive rings.

There are now 195 cardinals. 134 are under the age of eighty and eligible to vote for John Paul's successor. This is 15 more than the limit of 120 established by papal decree which John Paul once again did not follow. The large number of cardinals has led some to speculate that this is the last consistory of John Paul's long pontificate. This of course leads to speculations about when the Pope will die, will he resign, who the next Pope will be, will he be Italian, African, South American. During lunch at his residence with Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, who I have known since he was Archbishop of Onitsha, Nigeria, and who is often mentioned as "papabile," several bishops wisely observed that it is best not to waste one's time speculating and to leave the matter to providence. It is better during this time of the Pope's Jubilee to give thanks to God for the many achievements of this remarkable pontificate.

As Bishop of Rome, he has made a pastoral visitation to 301 of his 325 parishes. He has made 102 pastoral visits outside of Italy including his last seemingly exhausting visit to Slovakia. Italian newspapers have noted that this most visible of Popes has traveled 698, 310 miles, which equals 28 trips around the world or three trips to the moon! The Holy Father receives over one million people per year in Rome, including the 500,000 who attend his Wednesday General Audiences. When he was elected, the Holy See had diplo-

matic relations with 85 nations. It now has relations with 174. He has beatified 1,234 of the faithful and canonized 477 models of the Christian life.

It will take generations for the Catholic world to fully appreciate his prodigious writings, especially his seminal philosophical works. He has been an outspoken champion of the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. He has confronted a materialistic culture of death with the gospel of life. He has steadfastly opposed the death penalty and he was tireless in his efforts to urge the United States not to invade Iraq in a preemptive war. His ecumenical and interfaith activities have been astonishing. Not only was he the first Pope to visit a synagogue, but also he has repeatedly expressed the sorrow of the Catholic Church for the suffering of Jewish people at the hands of Christians. In a similar way he has repudiated the evils of the African slave trade and the racism and prejudice that have been so much a part of Europe and the Americas. Most recently he has challenged the leaders to write a European Constitution that will not ignore its Christian and religious roots.

Many thought that, since he has been considered several times, this would be the year that he would receive the Nobel Prize for Peace. Considering his age, his declining health, his 25th anniversary, the beatification of Mother Teresa, a previous Nobel Prize winner, there seemed no better

opportunity. Indeed, some observers who are not Catholics indicated that there could be no better candidate. However, on Oct. 10, just days before the festivities began in Rome, the Nobel committee in Oslo announced its choice and it was not the Pope. In a surprise move (not unlike the selection of Mother Teresa in 1979) they chose Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer little known outside of Iran. She is the first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for her work promoting the rights of women and children in Iran. The Prize Committee said that in honoring Ms. Ebadi it wanted to prod the Muslim world to recognize that Islam and human rights can go hand in hand. The Committee also wanted to embolden the struggling reform movement in Iran at a time of widespread turbulence and upheaval in the Middle East.

Almost all commentators applauded Ms. Ebadi as a strong and courageous woman whose non-violent struggle to promote democracy and human rights in Iran were justly recognized. The Committee was praised for not supporting the idea that the world is in the midst of a "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the western world. The award acknowledges that Muslims respect and strive for the same set of values for which western leaders strive.

Nevertheless, some commentators thought that Ms. Ebadi's excellent work could be recognized another year. They thought this should have been John Paul's year. David Brooks, who is not a Catholic, writing in The New York Times observed, "Pope John Paul II, who has had a more profound influence on more people than any

other living human being is never going to win the Nobel Peace Prize. For years the prize watchers have felt that the Norwegian committee would have no choice but to give him the award...I like to think the members of the committee understood the central truth, that they could not give the prize to John Paul. He is too big and complex for the award. The project he is engaged in defies their categories."

"Shirin Ebadi is obviously a courageous person, doing vitally important work. Nothing takes away from her heroism. But when history looks back at our era, Pope John Paul II will be recognized as the giant of the age, as the one individual who did the most to place democracy and freedom at the service of the highest human goals."

My days in Rome came to an end. I left the Vatican for the last time acknowledging the friendly, gracious salutes of the Swiss Guards bedecked in their colorful orange, red and blue uniforms designed, according to legend, by Michelangelo. I made my way to the great Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls (outside the walls of the old city of Rome). There I prayed for the Church of Lake Charles and for so many more at the site associated with the beheading of Paul of Tarsus. Thus I had completed my personal "ad limina" visit "to the threshold" of the tombs of Peter and Paul. On the flight back to Lake Charles I prayed that, like John Paul and Blessed Teresa, I would strive to recognize the dignity of every human person I encounter and do all the good that I can do in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord!



Bishop Edward K. Braxton

First Sunday of Advent

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand. Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36



Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops meet in Baltimore

WASHINGTON -- The Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops met for the twentieth time from October 7-9, 2003. The meeting took place at the Center for Continuing Formation at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore and was hosted by the Baltimore Archdiocese. The Committee is co-chaired by Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb of Mobile and Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada, who was serving in that capacity for the first time. Archbishop Nicolae of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada was welcomed as a new member of the Committee.

The main theme of discussion was the relationship of the Orthodox and Catholic churches with Islam. From a Catholic perspective, Dr. John Borelli, Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the USCCB, gave a presentation on the work of various Catholic dialogues with Islam both at the national and international levels. This was followed by a talk by Archimandrite Daniel Byantoro, the founder of the Orthodox Church in Indonesia, who spoke on issues involved in Orthodox relations with Islam. In a later session, Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat spoke to the bishops about Islam and its relations with Christianity, and about his work as founder and director of the Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation in Baltimore.

The bishops also considered two other themes during the meeting. On Tuesday evening October 7, presentations were made on Youth Ministry by Rev. Mark A. Leondis, Director of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese's Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministries, and by Rev. Brett Hoover, CSP, Director of Paulist Young Adult Ministries in New York. The relationship between bishops and priests was the topic of discussion on Thursday morning October 9.

The customary exchange of information about major events in the lives of the two churches also took place. These included the visit of

Romanian Patriarch Teoctist to Rome and Orthodox-Greek Catholic relations in Romania; the new Charter for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and new titles for metropolitans; developments in the Standing Committee of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the Americas (SCOBA); the situation of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the visit of a Serbian Orthodox delegation to the Vatican in February 2003; relations between the Vatican and the Moscow Patriarchate and establishment of Catholic dioceses in Kazakhstan; the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, its relations with Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and developments in the USA; the presence of a Vatican delegation in Athens in February 2003; developments in the International Orthodox-Catholic dialogue; the "Christian Churches Together in the USA" initiative; the papal encyclical, Ecclesia de Eucharistia, April 2003; an update on the work of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation; the symposium on Petrine Ministry that was held in the Vatican in May 2003; the presence of a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Vatican in June 2003 that was led by Archbishop Demetrios of America; and statements by the churches on same-sex marriages.

On Wednesday evening Cardinal William Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, presided over a Vespers service in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The next meeting of the Joint Committee is scheduled to take place October 5-7, 2004, at the headquarters of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA in South Bound Brook, New Jersey.

The Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops was established in 1981.

Streaming video of USCCB Fall meeting continues

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Communications of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has announced that streaming video of portions of the proceedings from the USCCB's recently completed Fall General Meeting in Washington, DC, will continue to be available on the Conference website through January 5, 2004.

The special streaming video page for the meeting has been accessible via the Conference website since the opening day of the Bishops' Meeting on November 10th. It includes excerpts from presentations on the floor of the meeting, daily press conferences held at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions, and interviews with bishop participants.

Clergy appointments made

LAKE CHARLES - The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, has announced five appointments of clergy in the diocese. All appointments are effective Nov. 29, 2003.

The Rev. Timothy Goodly, until now the Pastor of St. Henry Parish, has been appointed Pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish. Father Goodly will also continue in his current diocesan positions as Director of Vocations and Director of Seminarians.

In making the appointment Bishop Braxton said, "I thank Father Goodly for his faithful service to the people of St. Henry Parish during the past four years. He has accomplished a great deal of good there and enjoys the respect of the

parishioners." The Rev. Joseph Angadiath, the Catholic Chaplain



Rev. Timothy Goodly

to Lake Charles Memorial Hospital and in residence at St. Henry Parish, was appointed as Associate Pastor of Immaculate Heart of

Mary Church. Fr. Angadiath will continue his hospital ministry at Memorial Hospital.

The Rev. John Vianney Ijeoma, until now Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Jennings, was appointed Administrator of St. Henry Parish.

The Rev. Msgr. James Gaddy, Pastor of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Jennings and Dean of the Eastern Deanery of the Diocese of Lake Charles, was appointed Administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish.

The Rev. Hyacinth Okafor, C.M., who is new to the diocese, is appointed Associate Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish.