

Bishop Casey At the Council

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a fanfare of trumpets, he entered the basilica, carried on the Sedia Gestatoria. There was veneration written in every face at the sight of the Vicar of Christ, in God's plan the most important person in the world.

The Pope was close by us as he passed. He looked tired and pale, thinner than we had pictured him. Yet there was a benign smile on the face of this kind man as he blessed his bishops, almost a smile of satisfaction that God had allowed him to see the crowning achievement of his life, the Convocation of the Great Council.

Here is a man of 80, bowed down by the weight of years and a daily schedule of duties which would break men much younger than himself. Yet he is alert, keen, perceptive, alive to the needs of the people of the world, most generous in spending himself in the cause of Christ, a man of simple faith and charm, confident that his Council will do much to solve the problems pressing down on the world today. Here is John, Bishop of the Catholic Church, one of the great Popes in the long line extending back to the Fisherman.

Today's ceremony was elaborate and carried out with a finesse which bespoke careful preparation. It covered 35 pages in the booklet given to the bishops. Kneeling at his prie-Dieu before the Papal Altar, Pope John intoned the "Veni Creator Spiritus." The rest of this hymn, invoking the Holy Spirit to guide the Council, was chanted by the vast throng within the Basilica and the many thousands outside in the square.

Cardinal Tisserant, the bearded Dean of the Sacred College, celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit at a small temporary altar set up on the floor before the Papal Altar. Despite the splendid setting, there was almost an air of informality and simple devotion here, the Bishops making the responses and singing parts of the Mass.

After the Mass, each of the Cardinals approached the Papal Throne to make his obedience to the Holy Father, followed by the Patriarchs and by two archbishops, two bishops and two abbots who represented the 2,600 Fathers of the Council. Thereupon the Holy Father alone made his solemn Profession of Faith. Each of us had been given a copy of the Profession and, led by a Cardinal Deacon, we made our Profession of Faith in unison and signed it for the archives.

Then as all remained kneeling, the Pope rose and chanted a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide the Conciliar Fathers in the deliberations during the months to come. We include it here because it is a great prayer, most appropriate in view of what is at stake and the momentous decisions which must be made.

"Behold us, O Lord, Holy Spirit, behold us, restrained by the enormity of sin but gathered here in Thy Name for a special purpose. Come to us, abide with us; deign to descend into our hearts. Enlighten us as what we are doing and whither we are going and show us what we have to accomplish, so that with Thy help we may be able to please Thee in all things. Be Thou alone the inspirer and author of our decisions, Thou who with God the Father and His Son art alone entitled to glory. Suffer us not to disturb the balance of justice, Thou who dost yearn for what is most just for all. Let not ignorance lead us astray, nor favor sway us, nor regard for persons or offices corrupt us. Join us with Thee securely by the gift of Thy grace so that we may be one with Thee, and in no way depart from the path of truth. And as we are here gathered together in Thy Name, may we in all things maintain justice tempered with mercy so that here on earth our thoughts may in every way agree with Thine and that hereafter we may obtain an eternal reward for a task well done."

After the assembly chanted the Litany of the Saints, invoking the aid and protection of the whole court of heaven, there followed a colorful ceremony, the chanting of the Gospel according to the Latin Rite and then the "Supplicatio Orientalis," a symbol of the union of the Eastern and Western Churches which is always done at a papal ceremony. This ceremony lasted fifteen minutes and the Gospel and prayers were chanted by members of the Eastern Rite in Greek, Slavonic and Arabic, praying the Holy Spirit to give all present divine light and help. Their singing is different from ours, a peculiar rising and falling cadence, but rather beautiful and devotional.

The ceremony closed with an allocation or sermon given in Latin by the Holy Father seated upon the Papal Throne.

The Pope said the Council, like the Church itself, opens its arms to all "as a mother."

He said it is a "source of considerable sorrow" that most men still do not share in all the divine graces given to the world through the Catholic Church.

But, the Pontiff continued, "today we see, with great hope and to our immense consolation, that the Church, finally freed from so many obstacles of a profane nature which have hobbled her in the past, can, from this Vatican basilica raise her voice, resonant with majesty and greatness.

"Our duty is not only to guard a precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us, pursuing thus the path which the Church has ever followed."

Here it was, shortly after one o'clock and the Holy Father had entered the line of march at 9:30.



Procession crosses St. Peter's Piazza to basilica which marks tomb of Prince of Apostles.

Yet his voice came over the loud-speaker as clear as a bell and it was evident that he spoke from the heart. We noticed his strong gestures as he strove to emphasize his points.

As he was carried past us on the Sedia, the bishops in our section received a second blessing and a friendly wave of the hand. It was the end of an unforgettable experience.

The hour is growing late and this letter must be posted to Father Atwell. Your diocesan delegation is well and looking forward to the first business session at 9 a.m. Saturday morning. There will be three sessions next week and five each week thereafter until the probable day of adjournment, December 8.

Pray daily for the success of the Council and please include all of us in your good prayers that we may return safely to Rochester. It will be good to see Flower City Park again.

With my blessing to all at home.

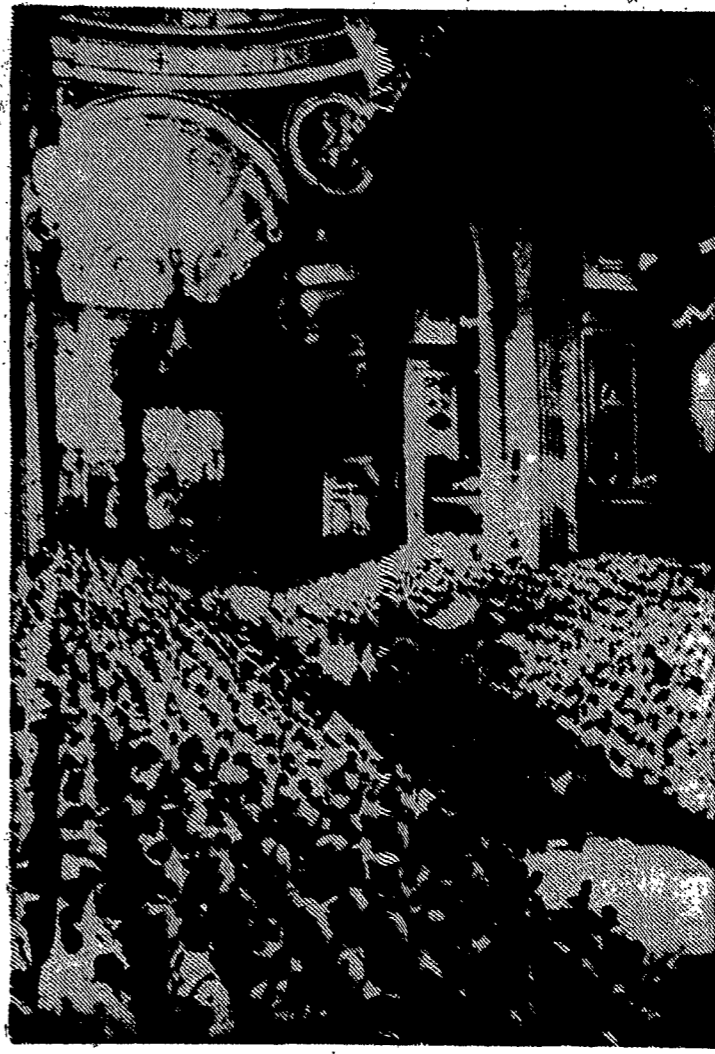
+ Lawrence B. Casey

Council Story Ranks Tops

Moline, Ill. — (RNS) — The Roman Catholic decision to open sessions of the Second Vatican Council to delegate-observers of other Christian bodies was ranked here by a Lutheran editor as the leading religious news development of the past year.

Dr. Albert P. Stauderman of Philadelphia, associate editor of The Lutheran, weekly newsmagazine of the United Lutheran Church in America, placed this story at the head of his annual selection of the most important religious news stories.

Among the other top stories, were news evidences of cooperation between the Missouri Synod and other Lutheran Churches.



Centuries old St. Peter's, largest church in Christendom, was a brilliant mosaic of modern floodlights for television and movies as 2,700 bishops began sessions of twenty-first ecumenical Council of Catholic Church.

Prelate Bars Chaotic Art

Paderborn — (RNS) — Roman Catholic Archbishop Lorenz Jaeger of Paderborn has issued a decree banning abstract modernistic art from churches in his archdiocese.

The decree, supplementing earlier regulations on "Painting and Sculpture in the Service of the Church," condemned "chaotic" works of modernistic art and stressed that abstraction in art must never lead to a disfiguration or distortion of the image of man.

Archbishop Jaeger's decree noted that man was created in God's image and that therefore a distortion of human faces and

bodies tended to show disrespect for God.

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N. Y. Cardinal Seeks Prayer Amendment

Washington — (RNS) — A spokesman for Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, proposed here a constitutional amendment to correct the Supreme Court's "misreading of the no-establishment clause" in banning a New York Board of Regents' Prayer from public schools.

The proposal was made by New York attorney Lawrence X. Cusack in a prepared statement submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee on behalf of Cardinal Spellman who was in Rome for the Second Vatican Council. The committee received it in connection with hearings on other proposed amendments dealing with prayer in public schools.

Mr. Cusack said the suggested amendment would make it clear that "our Constitution favors government cooperation with religion so long as such cooperation is devoid of favored treatment to any one religion or denomination."

"Any constitutional amendment," he said, "should go beyond a mere declaration that the voluntary recitation of non-denominational prayer is constitutionally permissible, thereby avoiding the serious risk that such a declaration would be misinterpreted to prohibit by implication traditional practices not specifically authorized."

The statement said that the amendment "would restore the original concept of the no-establishment clause" which was intended to prohibit the setting up, or recognition of, a state church by the government.

It suggested that the First Amendment be revised to read: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of a state religion or, in encouraging religion, the preferment of any religion or denomination, or prohibiting the free exercise of religion."

No Visions In Spain

Madrid — (RNS) — Bishop Jose Aguirre Trecu of Santander ruled here that alleged vision of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus in a village of the diocese are "capable of explanation on natural grounds."

He prohibited priests of the diocese and other religious visiting in the area of the Village of Sarabandal from going to the site of the alleged "miracles." The prelate also warned Catholic faithful not to visit that village in connection "with supposed miraculous apparitions."

Four girls from Sarabandal, ranging in age from 11 to 14 years of age, reportedly had seen visions at various times since June 1961.

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