

Pope Paul's First Year in Papacy

(Continued from Page 1)

be able to confine his heritage." And in the first days of his pontificate, the new Pope set doubts at rest by announcing his intention to continue the Second Vatican Council, which, he said, had "opened new avenues to the saving activity of the Catholic Church."

From Pope Paul have come many clear indications that he intends to give full reality to the dreams and aspirations of his predecessor of whom many had spoken as being like John the Baptist, "a man sent from God."

In various pronouncements and at audiences to Catholics and Non-Catholics, Pope Paul has issued the same invitation to openness and dialogue, to doctrinal and pastoral charity. In him have been found also the same insistence on constructive, positive work, the same desire to translate the message of the Gospel into a language modern people understand.

Pope Paul's determination to perpetuate the ecumenical flame lighted by his predecessor was evidenced especially by his recent decision to set up a new Secretariat for Non-Christians which is expected not only to bring a new level of dialogue to Rome, but dispel among Catholics what the Jesuit-edited weekly magazine America, called an "almost abysmal ignorance of non-Christian faiths."

When he announced the new secretariat, Pope Paul spoke of the need of a "catholicity" in which "every nationality merged for the good of the world community, every form of racism is condemned, every form of totalitarianism is revealed in its inhumanity."

In promulgating the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy approved at the close of the Vatican Council's second session,



Often austere in his manner, Pope Paul shows a warm affection for people when he visits the parish churches of Rome for Sunday Mass.

Pope Paul took the first major step in the aggiornamento of the Church up to date when he named as his first Secretary of State, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, a man who had been a member of the Council's primary goal.

It fell to Pope Paul's lot, too, to accomplish something that his predecessor had himself dreamed of, but was never destined to undertake — the precedent-shattering trip to the Holy Land.

There he also became the first pontiff in over 800 years to meet Eastern Orthodox's most exalted figure. His cordial encounter with Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras was ranked as one of the great ecumenical events of modern times and seen as a portent of a new, happier relationship between Rome and the Orthodox East.

Pope John was a man of initiative, and his successor is no less so. Recently Paul VI granted a relaxation of the Church's ban against cremation under certain conditions. He has also made a change in the formula for the distribution of Holy Communion to permit the faithful to participate "more actively and fruitfully" in the Sacrament, simplified his own title by changing the traditional formula used at the Vatican, "The Holiness of Our Lord,

the familiar Holy Father, broadened the influence of the Eastern Rite hierarchies within the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church by naming 10 consultants to that body, and appointed a group of official lay delegates to the Vatican Council's second session — striking testimony to the importance he has attached to the role of the laity in the Church.

Last July, he made a notable gesture toward the Russian Orthodox Church by approving the appointment of a Catholic bishop to attend celebrations in Moscow marking the jubilee of Patriarch Alexei, head of the Russian Church. In

other actions, he sanctioned the appointment of official Catholic delegates to important Protestant gatherings in the United States and Canada.

The gentle but firm attitude of Pope Paul is expected to be amply demonstrated when the Vatican Council opens its final third session this fall. He has already indicated his stand in favor of the collegiality or group responsibility of the bishops, a topic that has been much debated.

What the world is now looking to the Council for is a strong affirmation upholding religious liberty, and another on anti-Semitism, both of which would have incalculably far-reaching ecumenical consequences.

It has been said of Pope Paul, son of a lawyer and a man of scholarly inclination, that he resembles Pope Pius XII (under whom he served closely for 25 years in the Vatican Secretariat of State), and emulates Pope John — especially in seeking to communicate with people, even though he might be happiest alone all day in a book-filled studio.

In Rome, at first a barrier of coolness surrounded Pope Paul when he succeeded the enormously popular John XXIII. But in his many public appearances, his Lenten visits to the national churches, his frequent audiences, his letters and other institutions, including the Regina Coeli prison, have since won for him the warm affection of the Romans. Many have been deeply impressed by his humble, deeply sincere manner.

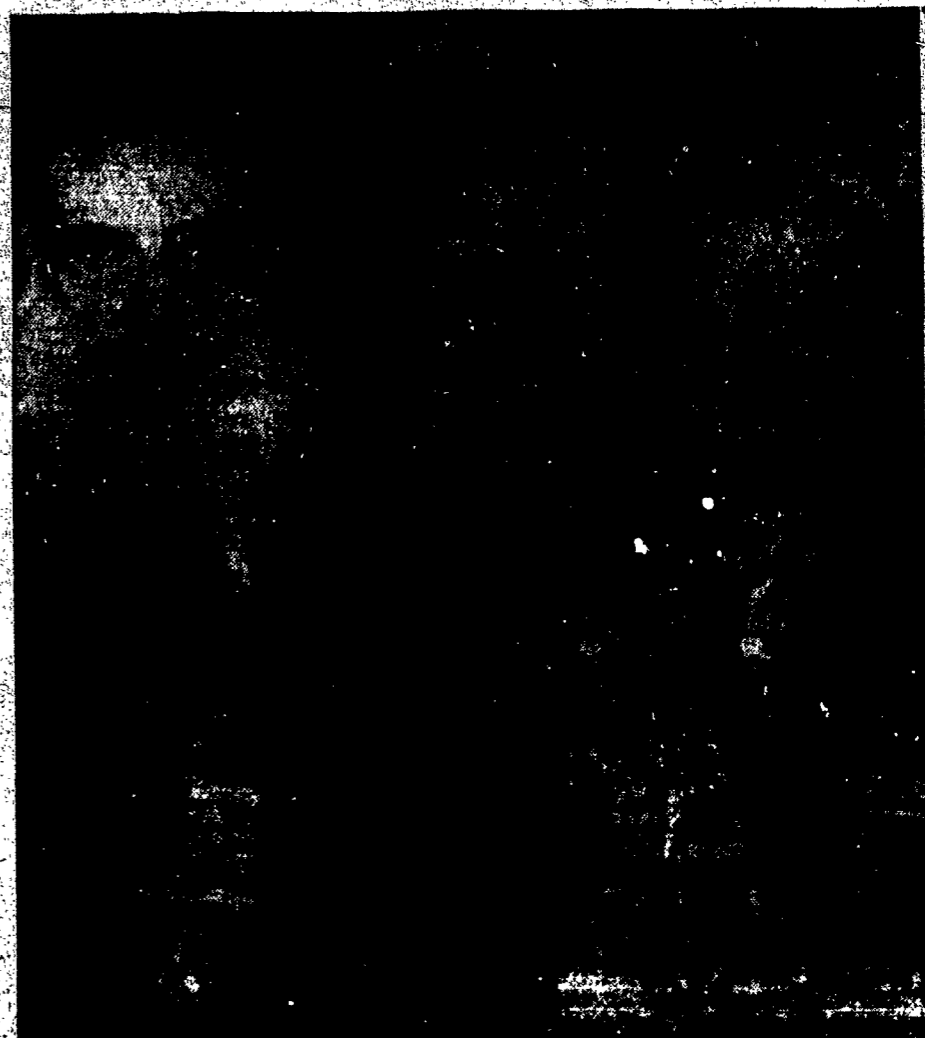
It is on his innate gentleness and understanding, combined with his wide experience and great administrative skill, that the Catholic Church depends for continued inspired and prudent leadership in its complex modern world.

Pauline's first year indicates, therefore, that Pope Paul, as captain of the barque of Peter, must stand alone at the center of the Church of God. He faces the frightening responsibility to chart its course through the turbulent waters of the twentieth century's final decades — but he must do it his way, not somebody else's way.

Then someday he can say to His only Master as the Lord once said, "I have glorified Thee on earth; I have accomplished the work that Thou hast given me to do."

When Pope Paul kneels late at night to end his helmsman's chores, thoughts something like those of the late Robert Frost — and frequently cited by President Kennedy and Dr. Tom Dooley — must stampede before him. Frost, in a poem titled "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" describes a horseback ride on "the darkest evening of the year."

He gives his harness bells a shake To ask if there is some mistake . . . But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep. Little wonder Pope Paul in his lonely eminence asks and deserves our prayers.



Highlight of Pope Paul's pilgrimage to the Holy Land was his meeting with Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras of Istanbul. The two prayed for religious unity at Gethsemane where the world's Saviour said the same prayer twenty centuries ago.



Pope Paul last summer met President Kennedy at the Vatican. The two symbolized the new era of freedom and opportunity the Catholic Church now lives in.

Christian Faith Dwindles in Tunisia

Carthage — (RNS) — Several hundred worshippers attended the last English-language service in Carthage's famous Roman Catholic Cathedral, situated on a hill here overlooking the site of the ancient city.

Under a recent agreement between the Vatican and the Tunisian Islamic republic, the cathedral and about 120 other Catholic churches in the country are

being turned over to government authorities for conversion into museums or other public institutions.

Among the worshippers at the service were about 150 American, Canadian, French and British diplomats, in addition to numerous Catholic faithful from European countries now resident in Tunis.

The Carthage Cathedral, built

in 1898 during the former French rule and noted for its towering twin spires, is to be handed over to Tunis officials at the end of June.

Conducting the last service was Father Givan Oostrom, a Dutch White Father who preached on the theme of love between rich and poor nations, and called on the former to help underdeveloped countries.

His congregation included 31 seminarians from the White Fathers seminary at Carthage, which is also being closed at the end of June. One of them was David Clement of Waterford, N.Y., who said he would return to the United States to be ordained there.

"But," he added, "I shall return to Tunisia or Algeria in two years, because I like North Africa and its people."

ACCORDING TO observers here, the Tunisian government's insistence on closing down all but a comparatively few of the Catholic churches in the country — the number of Catholics has shrunk from

more than 300,000 to 40,000 since independence — stems as much from its Islamic principle as a desire to do away with everything that reminds the people of having lived for a long period under French rule.

Most French, Italian and Spanish residents have long since returned to their homelands.

Almost all Catholic churches were built by French priests and have a distinct French architectural style.

However, the observers noted that there is also a strong Moslem campaign aimed at making the Islamic religion completely dominant in Tunisia.

So far, Vatican authorities have not revealed the details of the agreement between the Holy See and Tunisia.

At all events, Carthage, which became the first center of Christian civilization in North Africa — and where the first Christian martyrs were killed in 180 A.D. — may no longer be considered either as Catholic or Christian.



Carthage, Tunisia — (RNS) — The famed Cathedral at Carthage has been turned over to the Tunisian government for use as a state museum. Last Mass at the 68-year-old cathedral was celebrated in early June.



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