

Church Must Regain Self-Confidence



What does the Church need today? We always keep this question before our mind as we carry out our apostolic ministry. The Church needs to regain confidence in herself — We mean: in her divine promises and charisms, in the inheritance of truth which, through authentic tradition, constitutes the reason for her living and working; in her constitutional and mystical structure, to which Christ entrusted her true authenticity and unfailing and perennial continuity; in her capacity to recompose the broken unity of the one single and universal Christian family: in the validity and versatility of her pastoral effort and its ability to re-link the cloth of her ecclesial renewal to the twine of Christian manners, both old and new, as the times suggest and indeed in some respects oblige; confidence in her own mission, open to the world of today and tomorrow, a sign and a way for all mankind.

Pope's Theological Commission Meets at Same Time as Synod

By ROBERT R. HOLTON
Courier-Journal
Special Correspondent

Vatican City — Members of the Synod of Bishops will need not wait for expert theological advice when they convene here next month for a two-week working session.

Meeting in the Vatican at the same time will be the Holy See's Theological Commission, established last May by Pope Paul.

The 30-member commission will begin the first meeting in its history on Oct. 7. The extraordinary synod will convene Oct. 11.

In fact, the commission is a child of the first synod of bishops held here two years ago next month. It was at that gathering that the pope was formally petitioned to establish such a group.

When he named the commission last May, Pope Paul said he did so in order that "the Holy See will be able to make use of the special contribution of expert theologians, selected from the various parts of the world, and thus profit from wider exchanges and more varied experiences."

Having the commission in Rome at the same time as the synod is, in session was obviously not a mere coincidence.

And the presence of theologians from 18 different countries who represent a wide spectrum of theological thought on various Church matters could provide a test of sorts for the prelates in the synod.

The synod was called by Pope Paul to discuss methods of improving cooperation between the episcopal conferences and the Holy See and co-

India Pushes Birth Control By Mass Mail

New Delhi, India — (NC) — The Indian government has launched a mass mailing program to persuade some 2.5 million "opinion leaders" throughout the country to accept birth control.

The Minister of state for Family Planning launched the program with personal appeals mailed to 80,000 medical practitioners, who were requested to give their support to the birth control campaign.

The letters were accompanied by a free supply of 12 dozen Indian-made contraceptives to each recipient.

The mailing unit attached to the Ministry has already collected addresses of 300,000 "opinion leaders" and plans to have a total of 2.5 million addresses which will receive 20 letters annually "informing, educating and motivating them to accept the norm of a small family."

operation among the conferences themselves.

It is no secret that some of the prelates are coming to the synod prepared to demand that the hierarchy be given a greater role in the administration of the Church than it now enjoys.

These cardinals, bishops and others feel that the Pontiff and the Roman Curia should consult them more on vital Church matters before top policy decisions are made.

The question now in the minds of many Vatican observers is whether these same people are willing to expand their consultative program by seeking advice on subhierarchical levels, such as from an official commission of theologians.

"Those who are coming here to complain that the Holy Father and the Roman Curia runs the whole show without even consulting them will be faced with a real challenge," a Vatican official explained, adding:

"When theological questions come up in the synod, which they are certain to do, how willing will these bishops be to spread the cooperation idea a bit further by seeking the views of the commission members?"

"There will be no excuse for them not doing so since it will require only a mere telephone call or a short walk to get the widest-ranging theological opinions on a given matter from the real experts in the commission."

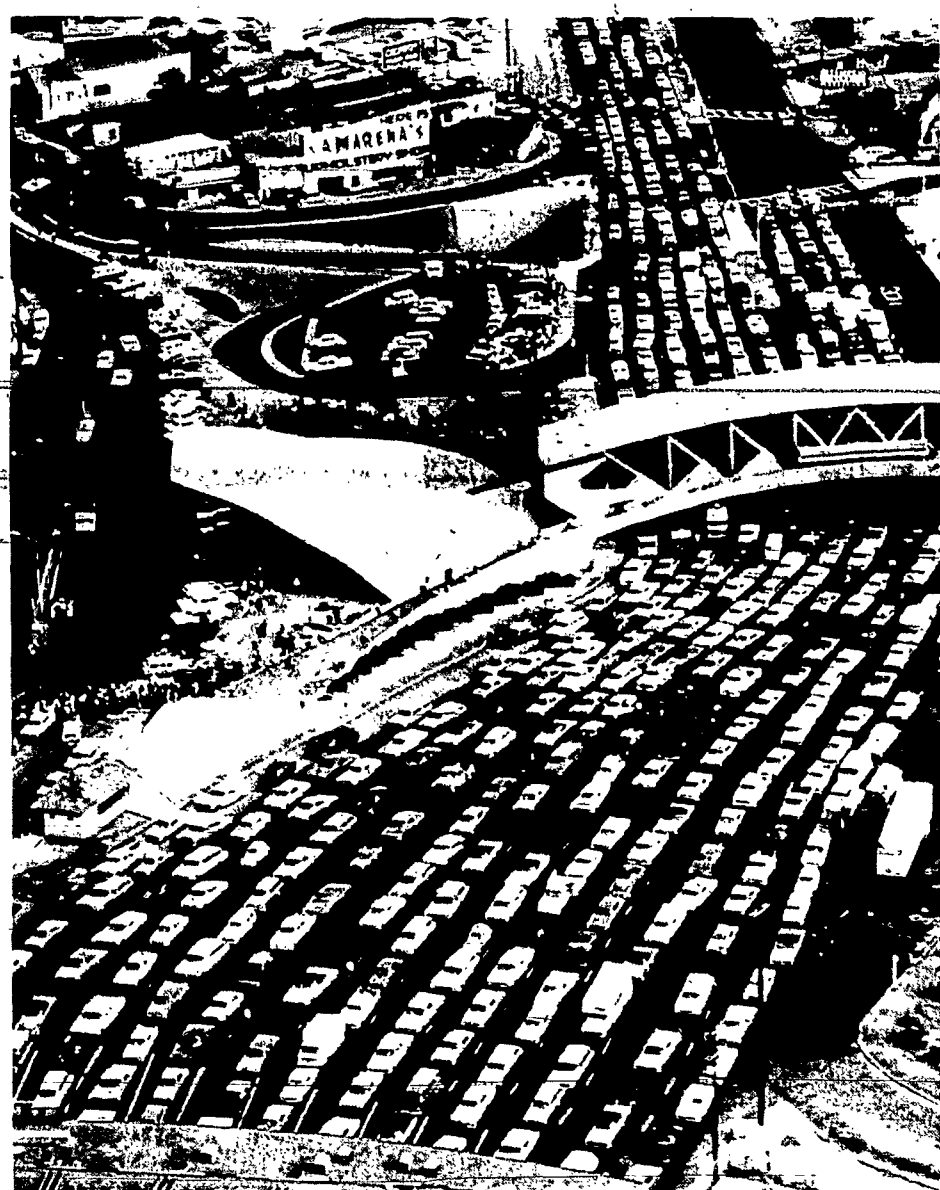
The commission was established as a consultative body and one designed to work in close cooperation with the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The synod also is a consultative body except in specific cases where the Pope decides to give them deliberative powers on a particular issue that comes before them. Neither at the last synod nor in connection with the coming session has any mention of deliberative power been made.

In naming the commission members Pope Paul stressed that it was his aim to have the commission work towards "the deepening and protecting of the faith, that is, for the deepening and protection of genuine revealed truth, and as a consequence, also of the spiritual life of all the Orders of the Holy Church."

As near as can be determined, the commission is an organ of and subject to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Some Church leaders, particularly among the progressives, feel this curbs the activities of the commission.

Whatever the outcome of the commission's first meeting, it will be a historic step. It may not draw the public attention that the synod will, but Church leaders agree that their deliberations could have a far-reaching effect on the Church of the future.



Border Crack-Down on Drugs

Hundreds of cars and pedestrians wait on the Mexican side of the border at San Ysidro, Calif., as "Operation Intercept" cracks down on the transport of marijuana and drugs into the U.S. Each auto was inspected, resulting in a several hour wait for home-bound tourists. (Religious News Service)

The Synod: an Historic Meeting

(Continued from Page 1)

than any in living memory, fraught with peril for the Church and at the same time pregnant with wonderful possibilities.

At stake in the debate is the authority of the Pope, the authority of the bishops, the success of the renewal launched by Vatican II, the contentment of Catholics, and perhaps the future of the ecumenical movement. There are other stakes, including the future of theological research, which is not the greatest of them, and personal holiness, which is.

Ranged on the one side are those who take as their battle-cry the words "collegiality and co-responsibility." Their leader is Leo Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels in Belgium. They point to the new theological perspectives opened by Vatican II and call upon the people of God to march down them courageously.

Under the light of collegiality, the bishops are seen to be successors to the college of the Apostles in teaching authority and pastoral rule. They share responsibility for the entire church, as indeed does the entire people of God.

Unless our fresh understanding of the nature and functioning of responsibility in the Church is put to practical use now, these scholars say, this historic moment could slip away. The Church would slide back into the habit of centralism, and co-responsibility would become little but a tantalizing memory.

Those ranged opposite declare that the divinely ordained constitution of the Church is perfectly clear. The

Pope has the God-given authority to act alone. He can always exercise his authority as he chooses, guided solely by what he considers best for the Church. It is not merely a question of dry legality or sterile juridicism, but of divine right.

Moreover, they caution, it is utterly false to speak of the body of bishops as if its collegiality somehow were independent of the Pope. Since the body of bishops always includes the Pope, it is misleading to see any opposition between the authority of the Pope and the collegial authority of the bishops.

The only valid distinction is between the Pope by himself and the Pope with the bishops.

Here seems to lie the dilemma. On the one hand, a sudden and clear realization of how the divine constitution of the Church engages the responsibility of all.

On the other hand, an unfailing vision of the Pope's primacy and his inalienable, God-given right to exercise it alone.

Whether or not the two parties find common ground, there will remain thorny theological problems such as the place of bishops' conferences, as human institutions, in the divinely constituted college of bishops. Even the collegial character of the synod is under dispute. Happily, these theological problems need not disturb the synod.

Bishop Rubin put it this way: "The schema takes the Second Vatican Council's teaching on primacy and collegiality as the starting point. This is the doctrinal foundation on which the synod must build solutions to

practical — that is, pastoral — problems. Clearly, the theological problems need much study and discussion, but the synod is seeking practical solutions for the needs of our times."

The problem facing the synod is so grizzly practical it could be called political. It reduces itself to authority in the Church. Both of the contending parties seem fully aware that the authority of the Pope and the authority of the bishops, whether the bishops are considered individually or collegially, are irrevocably linked.

How at the synod can the Pope and the bishops reinforce — or is it restore? — the Church's authority.

1,000 GREET POPE

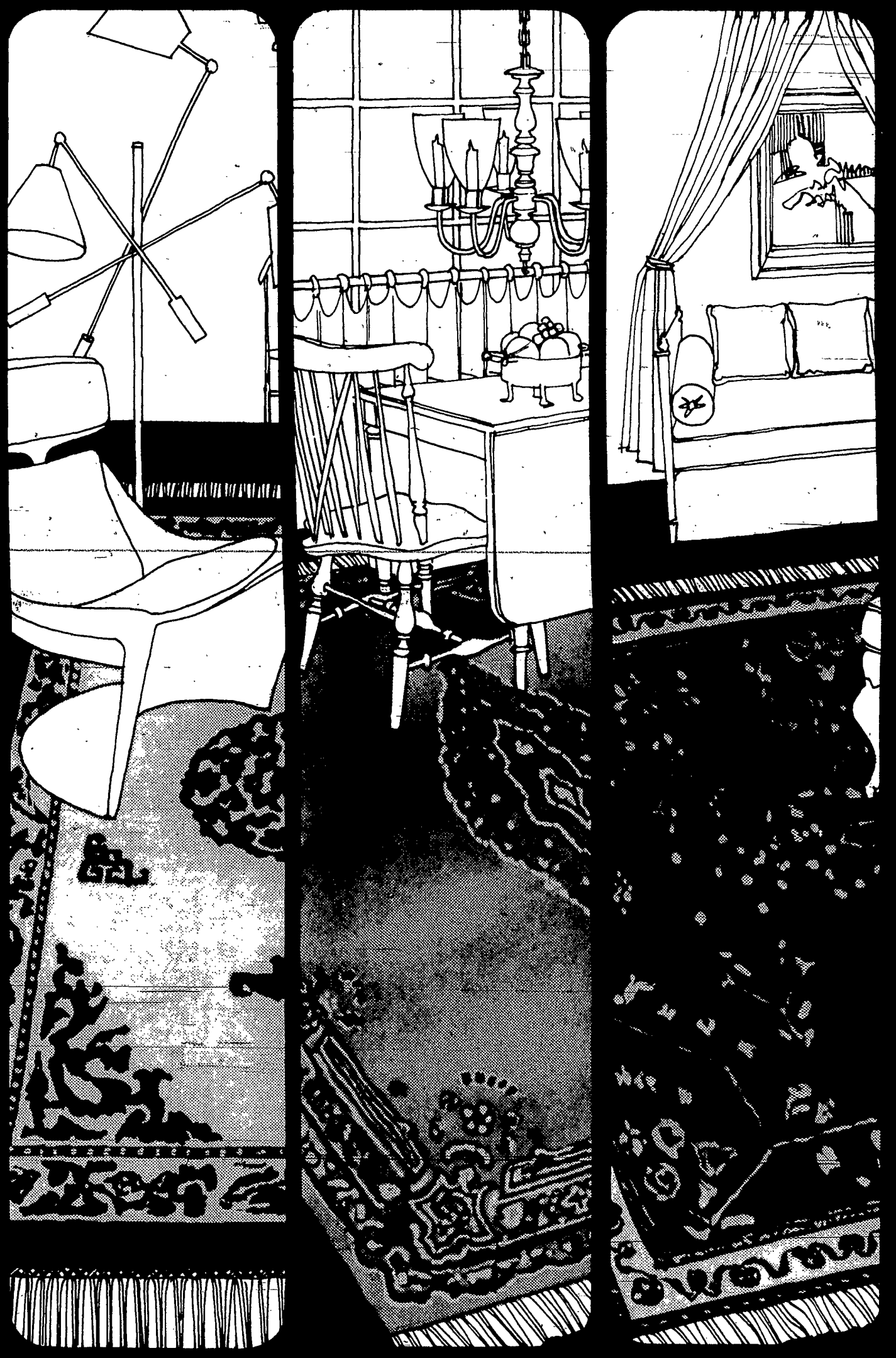
Vatican City — (RNS) — A crowd of about 1,000 pilgrims and tourists greeted Pope Paul VI in front of St. Peter's Basilica here as he returned to the Vatican from his Summer residence at Castel Gandolfo.

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