

Priesthood in Italy Subject of Hierarchy Study

By **ROBERT R. HOLTON**
Courier-Journal
 Special Correspondent

Rome — The Italian hierarchy is taking a long, hard look at the condition of the priesthood in this almost completely Roman Catholic country.

As an outline for the work of the general assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference, the delegates have a 76-page, super-secret document billed as representing fully the thinking of Italy's 40,000 secular and 4,000 regular priests assigned to diocesan work.

The document represents a synthesis of some 700 pages

which originally stood as the official report on a questionnaire sent to priests of Italy.

This is the first time in history that the Italian hierarchy took up in plenary session the full range of problems of the Italian clergy.

Four months ago a questionnaire was distributed to the priests in which they were asked to reply in detail to 212 questions dealing with such issues as celibacy, worker priests, salaries and other points on which there is considerable disagreement among the clergy.

Some 270 of the nation's 390 bishops are attending the con-

clave along with about 100 heads of religious orders for men and women and several leading Church laymen.

A considerable number of the priests have refused to reply to the questions after joining in regional discussions of them on the contention that they were "ambiguously worded" and designed to evoke a false picture of tranquillity among the Italian priesthood.

These detractors maintain that the true position of the clergy on many of the major issues — such as celibacy — has been played down in the reports on local assemblies of priests where the questionnaire was discussed.

Representatives of the hierarchy and others emphatically deny the claim. But nobody can deny from some of the criticism of the report that there is considerable conflict and tension among the clergy in Italy.

The report, it was learned, admits that there is widespread awareness of the problem of celibacy and that its effects are being deeply felt.

However, the report argues that only a small but vocal minority of the clergy has shown a hostility toward mandatory celibacy.

The report also claims that although "a considerable part

of the flock" is favorable to optional celibacy, they are asking only that good reasons be given for keeping it compulsory. If these reasons are given and compulsory celibacy is put in a positive light, the report says, these priests are willing to obey the rule.

Probably the greatest point of agreement was on the setting of a minimum pay of \$150 a month for priests and a greater equalization of stipends between rich and poor priests.

The age-old image of the blindly obedient, docile Italian priest in long black cassocks and wearing black, wide-brimmed hats is gradually fading.



Vatican Police Force

Representatives of the Vatican's three police units pose in dress uniforms. From left, a Swiss guard, in a uniform designed by Michelangelo, a Vatican policeman and a Palatine Guard. (Religious News Photograph)

'Some of Its Sons' Buffeting Church, Pontiff Declares

Rome — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI declared that those who "buffet and weaken the Church" are sometimes "not so much its outside enemies, but some of its sons," and recalled the warning of Jesus, "Woe betide the man through whom (scandals) come!" (Matthew 18:7)

Addressing some 270 participants in the general assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference, the 72-year-old pontiff questioned whether a number of problems plaguing the Church today could not be avoided "by greater respect for tradition."

The Pope deplored the growing tendency to ignore or have less reverence for ecclesiastical tradition, and "to invent and create a new system," based on changeable ideological and sociological data that are not supported by "intrinsic ecclesiastical needs."

"Thus," he said, "sometimes we see that those who buffet and weaken the Church in this respect are not so much its outside enemies but some of its sons inside, some of whom maintain they are its free supporters."

Turning to the question of priestly celibacy, Pope Paul once again expressed his firm belief in the need for an unmarried priesthood. Referring to the "freely chosen" celibate priesthood as "a fiery sign of the kingdom of God," he told the clerics that priestly celibacy "freed its members from many experiences that were useless and harmful to their work."

Speaking, in turn, to the bishops, the pontiff said he was fully aware of the difficulties bishops faced today, including the challenge to their teaching authority.

"It is with apprehension and pain that we see the firmness and purity of faith threatened not only by the implacable opposition of thought and custom in the world today, but also by a certain tiredness for Catholic truth," the Pope said.

He noted that the "repeated and monotonous challenge to Church authority and discipline could be met in two ways: by force and fear, or by helping people to give the best of themselves," and added, "The Church has chosen the second way — now there is dialogue among members of the Church the world over."

Education Bills Approved

Albany—Two bills of interest to Catholics of the state — one launching the move to repeal the Blaine Amendment and the other providing some state aid for the financially hard-pressed parochial schools, received approval of the Legislature within the last few days.

In their rush toward adjournment, the lawmakers seemed to be trying to take away some of the sting caused Catholics a fortnight ago when they adopted a bill loosening restrictions on abortion. Approval came for:

- An appropriation of \$28-million in aid to nonpublic schools under "examination and inspection" expenses.

- A proposed constitutional amendment repealing the so-

called Blaine Amendment barring state aid to non-public schools. The new version of "repeal-Blaine" must be voted again by next year's Legislature and then must be submitted to a voter referendum. The earliest the voters would receive the question would be November, 1972. It also gives any taxpayer the right to challenge the granting of such funds in the courts.

Funds would be paid non-public schools in the next school year to offset the expenses incurred by them for "services" they are required to perform, along with public systems. These include maintaining attendance and health records and administering tests.

The schools will be compensated 15 cents per day for each pupil in grades 1 through 6, and

25 cents per day for those in grades 7 through 12.

This would provide \$27 a year and \$45 a year, respectively. Thus a nonpublic high school with 1,000 students would be reimbursed \$45,000 for a school year.

Legislative leaders settled on this approach for assisting non-public schools as the only temporary solution possible at this time, because of the State Constitution's strict provision (Blaine) concerning "church-state" separation.

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Bp. Hogan Arrives In San Francisco

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where Sisters Janet Korn, Marilyn Gerstner, Barbara McGrath and Margaret Spellacy are serving.

Besides celebrating the Eucharist in the Sisters' convents and dining with them on the two evenings of his stay, the Bishop toured the huge slum area where they do such daily pastoral work as home-visiting, teaching adults to be religion instructors for their children and conducting a "Christian formation program" for young married couples.

The Bishop, accompanied by his secretary, Father Michael Conboy, stayed in the rectory of the Irish Columban Fathers who staff the two parishes where the Mercy Sisters work.

The Bishop's previous stops on his long trip have been to see the three mission parishes staffed by Rochester diocesan Sisters of Mercy in the cities of Uberlandia, Paranaiguara and Cachoeria Alta in south-central Brazil, and the parish of St. Joseph the Worker in La Paz, Bolivia, where Fathers Peter Deck-

man and Edward Golden are volunteer-pastors for 40,000 people.

The Bishop's long trip to encourage the 19 diocesan Sisters and priests who are volunteers in the six mission stations and to see their work is the first official visitation by a Rochester Bishop since the establishment of the initial outpost in 1964.

Besides the present group nearly a dozen other Sisters and two priests from the diocese have spent some time in these missions in the past six years.

The final leg of the Bishop's trip brought him from Santiago to Los Angeles last Friday and from there to Tucson, Ariz., where he spent the weekend with Father Joseph O'Connell, formerly pastor of St. James Church, Waverly.

Father O'Connell, a cousin of the bishop and a fellow-native of Lima, has been retired in ill health for several years. Once chaplain of Nazareth Academy, 1939-1952, he was later pastor of Holy Cross Church, Rochester, and St. Michael's, Livonia Center and St. Mary's, Honeoye Lake.

'Solons Broke Divine Law'

Brooklyn—(NC)—Brooklyn's Bishop Francis J. Mugavero charged here that the New York State Legislature violated divine law by passing the state's new abortion law.

Writing in a pastoral letter addressed to the Catholics of Kings and Queens counties, Bishop Mugavero commented:

"It is indeed regrettable that we must caution against acts which government permission encourages. Our New York state legislative majority has seen fit to allow the destruc-

tion of innocent unborn human life. However, the new law on abortion does not have divine approval."

In Alaska, Gov. Keith Miller vetoed an abortion bill passed by both houses of the state's legislature. The Alaska bill would have made abortion a matter to be decided between a pregnant woman and her doctor if the fetus had not yet developed enough to survive outside the womb.

Gov. Miller, a Methodist, said he personally opposes abortion.