



Father Joseph (left) and John Geary. (RNS)

Twin Priests Get Chance To Do Byzantine Rite

San Francisco — (RNS) — After 31 years, two Jesuit priests, identical twins, realized their ambition to serve in the Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church, but one of their first conclusions is: "Latin Rite priests don't know how easy they have it."

Fathers John and Joseph Geary, 54, San Francisco natives and both teachers at Belarmine Prep in San Jose, are administering to the spiritual needs of Eastern Rite Catholics at the Catholic Russian Center of Our Lady of Fatima here.

Given papal permission to offer Byzantine Rite Mass and administer sacraments in the Oriental manner for three years, the priests are subbing for German-born Father Karl Patzelt, SJ, who is on a three month leave.

Both are happy to be celebrating the age-old Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which they came to love through their studies of the Greek Fathers.

Noting that the Byzantine Mass is lengthy and the liturgical rules are strict, they agreed

that the "dignity, warmth and ceremony" of the service might appeal to the traditionalist Catholic of the Latin Rite. It is a sung Mass with incense, chants, litanies and Communion under both species.

The priests sing the Mass in English and the choir responds in English or old Slavonic.

"It's a timeless liturgy," said Father John Geary, and "endless" to some in the West.

Both priests admitted the rite is exhausting and taxing on the priest. It means standing stationary for long periods, and learning the liturgy is very difficult.

Ecumenically - oriented, the center has close ties with the local Orthodox Church, and fills the spiritual needs of some 50,000 Russians in the San Francisco area.

First set up in 1950, the center was named for Our Lady of Fatima because of the Blessed Virgin's intense interest in the conversion of Russia. Its primary aim has been to serve the spiritual, educational and welfare needs of the Russian populace.

No Vatican Panic over Paper's Charges

Vatican City — (NC) — If the Vatican press and radio are an accurate gauge of official thinking, there was no panic in this tiny city state over reports of the so-called "scandalous traffic" in Indian nuns.

There was a clamorous "stop the presses" midway through the press run of the weekly Vatican tabloid, L'Osservatore della Domenica.

But this bit of excitement, amid orders to get out a special spread on Indian nuns in a European convent for this week's edition, seems to be easily countered by the ice-cool ho-hum offered by a staffer of Vatican radio:

"If we got excited around here over every problem the Vatican encounters, we would never get anything done."

Quite expectedly, a paper like the Communist Paese Sera was front-paging (and back-paging) sensational stories of girls being sold into slavery. Just as expectedly, the Vatican daily was more conservatively cataloguing the positive side, running pictures of smiling Indian novices alongside denials from Church leaders from New Delhi to London that anything was wrong.

There have been, of course, "unfortunate events" connected

with the girls coming from India, as the Vatican has admitted. But that fact, along with an acknowledgement that an investigation is under way, constitutes the main points of any Vatican explanation.

The Vatican stated:

"The insinuations regarding an alleged 'traffic' in Indian girls are authoritatively denied. Large numbers of these girls are said to have been brought from India to Italy and other countries and deceived by attractive promises of Religious life and modern professional training, but then, often reduced to the status of 'servants' of the Religious community.

"As far back as last July 24 the NC News Service of Washington reported a denial by a high official of the Holy See.

"It is true that for the past few years, young Indian women, feeling called to a Religious life but without the necessary means, had turned to priests and other ecclesiastics for help in following what was, or what they believed was, their vocation.

"It was thus that a number of them were received in various Religious institutes, particularly in Europe. As normally happens in such cases, not all of them had a true Religious

vocation. Therefore some returned to their country while others preferred to remain in the countries which had received them.

"With the passing of time, it seems that some improprieties occurred. As soon as the ecclesiastical authorities concerned were informed of complaints aired regarding the matter, they adopted appropriate remedies. First of all, they gave instructions to suspend immediately the departure of young Indian girls for Europe and their admission to Religious institutes.

"At the same time, they started a detailed investigation to ascertain the truthfulness of the accusations and of the complaints mentioned above. This inquiry has been in progress since last July under the direction of the Sacred Congregation for the Religious and Secular Institutes, in agreement with the Sacred Congregations for Eastern-rite Churches and for the Evangelization of Peoples. It is not yet completed.

"The findings so far show, however, that several affirmations of the above-mentioned newspaper do not correspond to the truth and that others have been unduly exaggerated. In many cases, however, the contrary of what was published has been positively proved."

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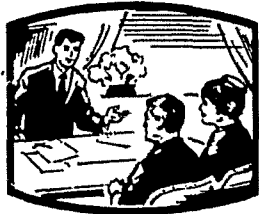
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