

# Pope Paul Resignation Denied by Vatican

By BOB HOLTON  
Religious News Service

Vatican City (RNS)—The Vatican confirmed here that Pope Paul admitted in April he would like to "shake off the burden" of the papacy but felt he would be shirking his duty if he did.

The Vatican's report was said to be a translation of remarks he made last April 24 to a group of nuns received in private audience.

"It would be beautiful to be able to shake off the burden of the Church and say I do not want it," the Pope was quoted as saying.

The Vatican Press Office said it made public the papal remarks to refute statements published in Italian newspapers.

There has been considerable speculation that Pope Paul will step down from his leadership of the world's more than 600 million Roman Catholics on reaching age 75 on Sept. 26.

The Vatican has repeatedly denied the claims and various top sources have maintained that it is not in the nature of the Pope to leave a job which he feels remains undone.

Only one Pope in the history of the Church has voluntarily stepped down. Pope St. Celestine V voluntarily abdicated in 1294 at the age of 80, and retired to a monastery.

Rumors of a possible modern-day resignation were spurred when the pontiff, in 1966, asked all bishops in the world to tender their resignations on reaching

age 75. Only recently, Paul VI ruled that all cardinals, on turning 80, will be relieved of top Roman Curia posts and will not be permitted to cast ballots in the election of a Pope.

In the Italian newspapers, the pontiff was quoted as having told the gathering of nuns last September flatly that "I do not want" to give up the papacy.

The Vatican said the statement carried in the papers was a misquotation that came about when the Pope departed from his prepared text during the audience.

Italian newspapers maintained that they took their quotes from a tape made by someone in the audience.

The Vatican said its taped version of the remarks was considerably different.

In the speech, the Pope asked the nuns for "understanding and affection" to make the awesome burdens of his office easier to shoulder.

Sources close to the pontiff — even members of his own family — have said in recent years that the pontiff feels quite alone and considers that he is often criticized for things that he is doing for the good of the Church and mankind.

He also has been described by



close associates and friends as a "very sad man who cries often."

leave office alive," said one source, adding:

"The very fact that the Holy Father feels so strongly about his pontificate that he would cry and be sad about public rejection of some of his decisions is to me sure-fire proof that he will never

"This is not the nature of the man. He is the type who would never walk away from an unfinished job. And apparently he feels he has a lot of work yet to do."

## Abortion, Birth Control Condemned as 'Progress'

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope Paul VI challenged the use of the word "progress" in relation to birth control and legalized abortion laws that have been enacted in some countries and states.

The pontiff told representatives of the Union of Bavarian Catholic Families that "family planning" and "interruption of pregnancy" are "exalted" in some countries as "authentic progress."

However, the Pope told the group in a private audience, in-

stead of marking any progress among mankind, the two actions "really destroy a healthy, long and happy family life."

Pope Paul did not specify any nation or state, leaving it to those nations or states with such laws to consider the criticism leveled at them.

As he often does, the Pope outlined for the group what he recognizes as the Church's teaching on the genuine values of marriage from the standpoints of humanistic as well as Christian values.

## Pope Calls for Peace In African Country

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul has appealed for an end to what he described as a "slaughter" in the small East Central African nation of Burundi.

Describing the African republic as in the throes of "pitiless and ferocious madness," the Pontiff said he has sent a special envoy to Burundi to offer help and advice.

Though both the nature and the extent of the disturbances in the tiny country nestled in high hills along the backbone of central Africa remain largely a mystery, there have been reports in recent weeks that several thousand people in Burundi were massacred following an attempted coup against President Michel Micombero at the end of April.

"What is going on in Burundi, the Pope said, is "a bloody struggle of brothers against brothers" that threatens to destroy a nation

that had seemed well on the way toward progress.

About 45 per cent of Burundi's estimated 3,600,000 population are Christians, mainly Roman Catholic.

In 1966 the then Premier, Michel Micombero, in a military coup, overthrew the reigning monarch Mwami Ntare V, and established a republic, installing himself as president.

The present turbulence reportedly has resulted in the death of Ntare V. According to Burundi's Voice of the Revolution radio, the ex-king was killed in a crossfire while bands of dissidents sought to release him from house arrest in the eastern Burundi town of Kitega.

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