

Pontiff Summons Bishops for Synod

Vatican City (RNS) — On the recommendation of a special Council, Pope Paul VI has called a world Synod of Bishops for October 1974.

The Synod, the fourth since the close of Vatican II, which advised the regular holding of such sessions, will deal with the "evangelization of the contemporary world."

Last October, the 15-member Bishops' Council of the Permanent Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops recommended to Pope Paul that plenary sessions of the Synod be held every three years instead of every two.

Under the biennial plan, which had been in force since the first synodal meeting in Rome, 1967, the plenary sessions were slated for every two years.

The second Synod of Bishops was held in Rome in 1969, and the third in 1971.

Pope Paul instructed the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Jean Villot, to accept the recommendation made by the Bishops' Council, and set the opening of the fourth Synod of Bishops for October 1974.

The 1971 Synod focused on the problems of the ministerial priesthood and

on questions of justice in the world.

The letter in which Cardinal Villot made known the Pope's agreement on the calling of a plenary session was dated Feb. 3.

However, as is the custom in the Vatican, the contents of the correspondence were not disclosed until Feb. 19, giving all the bishops of the world ample opportunity to have received and read the letter before its contents became world news.

At synods, prelates gather as representatives of the bishops of the world to discuss major problems facing the Church in a time of rapid change.

The permanent Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, which is headquartered in Rome, meets regularly and handles the day-to-day business of the synod.

The Bishops' Council of the Secretariat seeks out ideas on subjects to be discussed by the bishops in synod, screens the suggestions and then submits recommendations on an agenda to the pontiff.

The pontiff makes the final decision on the topics to be discussed and also is free to accept or reject any recommendations a synod plenary ses-

sion might submit to him.

It has been reported that the Permanent Synod Council last October had suggested to the Pope that the problems of the family in the modern world be discussed. This was considered a touchy subject, however, as it would have opened the way for a full-scale discussion of birth control before the world's bishops.

The pontiff has said several times that he considers the issue of birth control a closed one and that it is not a topic for open discussion among Catholic groups.

In his letter on behalf of the Pope, Cardinal Villot noted that "taking into account the desires of several episcopal conferences, and in particular, proposals made by the Council of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, the Holy Father chose as the subject of the meeting 'the evangelization of the Con-

temporary World."

The cardinal said that "faced with the difficulties of the present time, the synod fathers will thus be called upon to study the most adequate ways to convey the salvation-bringing message of Christ to all men of God."

To some Vatican observers the agenda seemed removed from the many controversies that face the Church today. "I don't see how this particular topic can create too many arguments among the bishops of the world," said one source.

Delegates to the synods are usually chosen by popular election from among their peers in episcopal conferences. However, Pope Paul has in the past reserved the right to name his own personal representatives to the synods and he also has named heads of the Roman Curia congregations as delegates to the deliberations.

BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



Sort of mine who avoids movies as if they were a plague wants very much to see Paramount Pictures' film by Franco Zeffirelli titled "Brother Sun, Sister Moon."

When I told him I had seen a preview, he yawned.

"What's it about?" he asked, trying to stifle it.

"It's about St. Francis of Assisi. You studied his life when you were at Loyola."

"St. Francis is for the birds. I think I got a D-minus on the paper I had to write about him. Who'd go to see a movie about a saint? Paramount will lose its shirt."

"No it won't. It's a beautiful picture. Kids will flip over it — just as they did over the psychedelic sequences of '2001.'"

"Gimmie a reason."

"Well, in the first place he deserted from one of the Crusades because he thought it was a cruel war intended for pillage, not a liberation of the Holy Places from the hands of the infidel."

"Hey, that's pretty cool."

"Then he gets home to Assisi, learns to love his mama but hates his father."

"Good for Francis baby. That wasn't in the book I studied."

"Well, St. Francis, played wonderfully well by a young long-haired British actor named Graham Faulkner, meets a beautiful rich girl named Clare, played by Judy Bowker. She befriends him, even though the whole town is saying that he's as nutty as a fruit cake."

"I know a lot of chicks like that."

"Anyway, Francis' father makes a big pitch to him to come back to reality and take his place in the family business which he'll one day inherit. He obeys, but he's revolted by what he sees: poor peasants sweating over dyeing vats, shearing sheep for wool in vile cellars, toting bales of fine embroidered cloth in their rags. It's a Dark Ages sweatshop that Ennio Guarnieri's cameras turn into an illustration from Dante's Inferno. Then, to cap off his pitch, the father takes his son into a great vault in which he keeps the gold coins and stacks of other treasures he has bought, for pennies, from looting Crusaders. So guess what Francis does?"

Courier-Journal

"Throws up."

"No, he throws his father's treasures out the window to the poor people in the streets. The father beats the hell out of him, then drags him before the fat local Bishop and demands that the Bishop send the kid off to jail. The Bishop looks like he might do just that — he had the power, you know — but Francis silences him and his father and everybody else in the mob by suddenly peeling down to, his skin."

"Strips?"

"Yes. He wants no more of this world's material goods. He walks naked through the stupefied crowd, stands under an archway, lifts his arms to Heaven and dedicates himself to a new life of poverty, prayer, and caring for the poor and the sick. Disciples, some of them married, gather around him, and he forms orders and degrees of his calling. They beg in the crooked old streets and sing the praises of the Lord. Their ragged clothes are bound with a piece of rope. They go barefooted in the rain and mud, ignore the garbage and slops thrown down on them. The beautiful rich girl comes to the door of her home and walks into the rain to hand Francis a loaf of bread. Then she joins the mission and forms an order of nuns. The Poor Clares, they still call themselves."

"You shake me, Daddy-o."

"I'm not finished. Neither is Francis. He and a couple of his people make their way to Rome and hang outside the Vatican for a long time, while some guy tries to wangle an audience with Pope Innocent III. Finally, they get in. Their dirty rags are in shocking contrast to the rich raiments of the Papal Court. Francis' pal had written him a stilted and subservient speech — asking that his order, to be called the Franciscans, be recognized by the Church. But, kneeling before the Pope, Francis drops the prepared speech, and calls on everybody from the Pope on down to get rid of life's luxuries and pay more attention to the poor."

"What's Paramount charging for a ticket?"

"I don't know . . . maybe three or four bucks."

"Well, don't just stand there, Daddy-o. Lend me three or four bucks."

Pope Ignores Attempt on Life

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul defied a reported threat on his life when he appeared in the window of his study overlooking St. Peter's Square to address crowds who gathered there Feb. 18.

The report of the planned assassination was published in a Milan newspaper, Corriere Della Sera.

The pontiff appeared as scheduled at noon and delivered a short sermon before giving pilgrims and Romans his blessing.

The newspaper said that the threat against the 75-year-old pontiff's life was made Feb. 17 in an anonymous telephone call to its office. It said the caller warned that the Pope would be shot from the crowd as a protest against conscientious objectors and against anti-militarism.

The status of conscientious objectors to military service — hitherto punished as deserters — was recently legalized in Italy.

Although the pontiff disregarded the threat, Italian authorities did not take any chances, posting more than 200 National sharpshooters in and around the huge square, and on the roof and dome of St. Peter's Basilica. About 80 members of the Vatican Guard also were stationed in various places throughout the square, the newspaper reported. According to the report, the anonymous caller said the actual shooting of the pontiff would be carried out by a man wearing women's clothing. The caller said a rifle with a telescopic sight would be used, hidden until needed under the skirt worn by the assassin.

Pope Paul was attacked in the Philippines in 1970. He escaped injury but the would-be assassin came within inches of stabbing the pontiff.

Earlier, the Pope's motorcade was stoned during a trip to Sardinia. Evidence later showed that the stones were tossed by men engaged in a labor demonstration and the stones were not intended to strike either the papal car or any of the cars in the motorcade.

On another occasion, a man tossed several stones near the pontiff during an audience at the papal summer residence at Castelgandolfo.

After the Manila assassination attempt, the pontiff pleaded for mercy for his attacker and said that despite threats against his

life and any dangers his public appearances might bring, he had no intention of hiding from the people.

Because of his many public appearances and the relatively low key security that normally surrounds the Pope, particularly at his weekly general audience and at his Sunday window appearances, he is regarded by some as about the easiest assassin's mark of the world figures.

"It is true that anyone who wants to get close, within knife-tossing, stone-throwing or small pistol range of the Holy Father can do so fairly easily," said one Vatican source. "He makes far more public appearances than any other world figure and I am sure there is considerably less protection for him — especially on his home grounds."

The Pontiff, it is known, feels armed men around a spiritual leader like himself are incongruous and he has all but banned any major security measures during his public appearances in Italy.

However, when the Pope travels to foreign nations, those nations feel responsible for his safety and normally provide heavy armed guards for his protection.

Depending on the country, the military muscle of the guards will be as under cover and hidden from public view as possible. However, in other cases, such as during the Pope's visit to Bogota, Colombia, several years ago, heavily armed soldiers swarmed around the pontiff wherever he went and it was learned at the time that this annoyed the Pope. But the soldiers remained near him nevertheless.

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