



The Pope at 80 . . .

' . . . the burning questions are always complex'

BY LEE HEALEY
RNS Correspondent

Rome (RNS) — As Pope Paul, born Sept. 26, 1897, enters his 81st year, he has been confronted by speculation on all sides about his possible resignation.

Bishops — and he is the bishop of Rome — have, under his papacy, been ordered to submit their resignations at age 75. Cardinals over the age of 80 have been deprived of their centuries-old right to help select an eventual successor to Paul.

Since the Vatican seems to have made it quite clear that Paul does not regard the papacy as something he can lay down so lightly, the Italian press is now beginning to assess the balance sheet of his 14 years as pope.

Among the arguments favored by many who would like to see Pope Paul step down for a younger man with more modern views is that he is in poor health — a view that seems to be held by numerous American pilgrims.

But it is not so much Paul's health as his agility that is impaired. The Pope works long hours and follows the tiring schedule every day. His voice may sound cracked and possibly tired — but it always has, yet goes on day after day, rarely missing any of his appointments. So a man of 81 should be forgiven if his knee-joints bother him.

One of the most respected voices of the Italian Catholic

press, *Famiglia Christiana*, Italy's best-selling magazine, interviewed some writers and journalists for their impressions of the Pope. Jean Guillon, French philosopher and a personal friend of the Pope, described him as having an intuitive and penetrating intelligence and great sensitivity and said:

"In Paul VI, there exists a torment generated by the idea of perfection, as well as the realization of the conditions in which this perfection must struggle for survival. Paul knows that nothing is simple and has said 'the burning questions are always complex. Honesty requires that they should not be treated in haste. We must respect the complexities.'"

Dr. Guillon continued: "He is a man tormented who remains calm, an active man who is slow to choose, a bold man who is very patient, a reformer who would like everything to be perfect and yet tolerates everything. Paul is direct, simple, but nevertheless, enigmatic."

Many of those interviewed agreed that Paul, who has been a priest for 57 years, is a man of great faith, great intelligence and cultural sensibility.

Those who know him well, such as Federico Alessandrini, former director of the Vatican press office who retired recently, described him as a man rich in feeling and capable of deep affection for his friends.

Another former Vatican press officer, Luciano Casmirri
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GEM Tensions Aired

By JOHN DASH

Questions raised by the diocese about Genesee Ecumenical Ministries operations are getting a good hearing and diocesan delegates say they are "very optimistic" that tensions will be relieved by current talks.

Those talks are expected to come to an end tonight, Wednesday, at a full meeting of the Ecumenical Strategy Board (ESB), with specific recommendations for revamping the GEM constitution forthcoming.

Two weeks ago it had been thought that the diocesan difficulties with GEM could be aired and solved at a special meeting called at Asbury First Methodist Church for Saturday, Sept. 17.

That meeting, however, has not yet been adjourned and as of press time, several points under discussion had not been made public.

It is the feeling of diocesan delegates to these meetings that the position the Church has taken has, by and large, been subscribed to by several major denominational groups including the Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians in the area.

Msgr. George Cocuzzi, vicar for urban ministry who heads the diocesan GEM team, noted last week that the diocesan position "has been fairly well received." He also said that "written observations" on the GEM structure and process, from other denominations, "showed substantial agreement with the diocese."

He specifically cited the Methodists as having a position "quite close" to

that of the Roman Catholics.

At the core of the diocese's concerns, Msgr. Cocuzzi said, are the following points:

- There is a "need to separate out where the focus of action" is for the various denominations in GEM. "Our difficulty has been to find the mechanism whereby all these judicatories are able to mesh."

- There is a need to share more information, goals and objectives, to pave the way for cooperation in social justice programs.

- The need for flexibility in responding quickly to crisis situations. This corresponds to another felt need for union in deliberate long range planning.

"We want to make sure the (various denominational) 'mission people' are together all the time (on the ESB)," Msgr. Cocuzzi said.

The points of concern were raised "vigorously and explicitly last Spring," John Salter, head of the Office of Human Development and a GEM delegate, also said last week.

He characterized the recent discussions as "candid" and commented that among others in GEM, "there is a fairly broad realization that we have a case — our concerns are shared by others."

As a result of the discussions, he said, "There is explicit and implicit a stronger commitment to social justice as the primary focus of GEM."

Msgr. Cocuzzi commented: "It there's a bad

guy" it's not a person but a difficulty in getting the (denominational) modes of operation to come together."

Salter noted, "From the OHD perspective, if the final resolution is satisfactory, we'll be working closely with GEM — we'll contribute our input and draw from it."

"Although the initial
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Focus: 1977-78

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan concludes his two-part series on the diocesan focus for 1977-78 on Page 3. To learn about diocesan plans for the immediate future and new directions in store, *Pastoral Perspective* is must reading.

St. Mary's Awaits Word from Albany

By JOHN DASH

Sometime this week, Sister DeChantal LaRow, administrator of St. Mary's Hospital, expects a letter to arrive from Dr. Robert P. Whalen, the State Commissioner of Health. That letter will concern, she thinks, the recommendation of the commissioner's advisory body that the hospital close its obstetrical unit.

That letter will be the highest, but only one of many, communications on the question that Sister DeChantal has received over the past four years, as a variety of planning and study groups have approached the question.

It was thought last June when the executive committee of Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency voted down a proposition to close the hospital's obstetrical unit that the matter was settled for at least some time.

Planning and study groups have consistently looked at St. Mary's situation as one of failing to meet state set numbers of

births in relation to the number of beds the hospital has in its obstetrical facility. Sister DeChantal and others have equally consistently defended the fact that the hospital's religious identity and ethical values transcend that consideration.

She notes the irony in the situation that all the while the question of closing the obstetrical unit has been bandied about, the number of births in St. Mary's has been increasing, and the number of allied services rendered through the hospital also has been growing.

For the present, Sister DeChantal is exploring a process, established recently, of seeking from the commissioner a waiver based on the religious nature of the hospital.

In that process, she expects to present the commissioner with a variety of data, including petitions and testimonies from the general public on the quality of care at the hospital, and the religious and ethical values represented by the presence.

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Photo by Susan McKenna

Escort Service

Father Joseph Trawinski, OFM, keeps a steady hand on the umbrella as he escorts Bishop Joseph L. Hogan into St. Theresa's Church on Mark Street, Rochester. Bishop Hogan was the principal concelebrant of a Mass Saturday, Sept. 24, marking the Golden Jubilee of the parish, of which Father Trawinski is pastor.