

# The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

## I'll Take The Pope's Charisma

What is more important: what a pope says or who he is?

In the wake of John Paul's electric tour of the United States, this question seems more important than ever. Some Catholics ponder carefully and analyze every word he says to see whether he was taking a liberal or a conservative position. Others simply enjoy his charm, charisma, love of people, his joy and goodness. Which will it be? As one Chicago attorney remarked, "He is charismatic, but a traditionalist."



Since he has become pope, I have read every talk of his that has appeared in the English language edition of *Osservatore Romano*. I have read every word of his talks in the United States. And I don't see all that much traditionalism. Having read all of his poems translated into English, his philosophy book, "The Acting Person," and his play (in Italian), I don't see all that traditional a person either.

I wish that some of the talks in the United States were more distinguished, but I think the pope was hampered by a very bad speech writer or text drafter.

I don't think he is going to permit the ordination of women in the near future and I profoundly regret that. I'm afraid he is not going to dispense men from celibacy, and I regret that too. But I am not willing to judge his whole papacy by those two issues.

In reviewing my book, "The Making of the Popes 1978," Father Richard McBrien called me theologically naive for suggesting that who a pope is and what he does may be far more important than the powers he claims. I am not a theologian but a sociologist. I was not writing a book of theology. Indeed, I do not see how you can write a book of theology about a papal election. My observation was sociological, and I don't think it is naive at all. Like many other clerical reviewers of "The Making of the Popes 1978," Father McBrien felt perfectly free to play fast and loose with the truth. The observation in context was attributed to a very distinguished observer of the Roman scene and was not, in fact, mine.

(Father McBrien and I have had our problems before. He purports to be a liberal feminist, yet he once intervened with a departmental chairman to attack the appointment of my sister to a theology department on the grounds that she was my sister. He should have looked around the room to see if the woman he was denouncing was there. She was, and need I say she was not particularly amused.)

McBrien may claim, as he recently has, that justice for women is the No. 1 problem of the church. But he is, in fact, sexist because he wanted to exclude from the claims of justice one woman for something which completely beyond his control. Whatever else my sibling may have done, she didn't choose me for a brother. So much for liberal folk heroes.)

The pope was a revered and important religious figure long before there was any question of him being a "super bishop" over all the other bishops and the rest of the church — because such exercise of power was geographically impossible.

A pope's influence was religious and moral, symbolic and charismatic, rather than institutional and structural. But for the ordinary Catholic and his daily life, a man of strength and vision, a man of hope with the common touch, a man who smiles and laughs and loves people is a much better "sacrament" of the meaning of Christianity than an aloof, timid, withdrawn pope who takes all the approved liberal doctrinal positions.

I would much prefer a "hopeful, holy man who smiles" who dispenses priests from celibacy and permits women to be ordained. But if we can't have both, then I will settle for the man of hope, the man of laughter, the man who sings, the man who generates warmth and enthusiasm.

It is naive to assume that ordinary non-Commonwealth-reading Christian laity see a hoot anymore about what the pope said on birth control or divorce or such matters. The overwhelming

statistical evidence shows they have made up their minds on these issues and still cheer enthusiastically for the Polish pope anyway. Does anyone, even Father McBrien, seriously believe that the married people who stood in the crowds and cheered so enthusiastically for John Paul went home afterwards and threw out their contraceptives?

So, I'll settle for the charisma, and reserve judgment on the traditionalism. My judgment on John Paul at the end of the first year of his papacy is profound admiration for a man who has been so patient, so cautious, so restrained as he strives to learn a new job and get the feel for what needs to be done. The press has tried to push him into a certain paradigm to make him easier to write about. Take a good look at that jaw, my friends. No one is going to push him around.

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## Deaths

### Fr. Jamison, Redemptorist

Father William Jamison, CSSR, who served at Notre Dame Retreat House in Rochester and Canandaigua, died Oct. 27, 1979, at the infirmary his order operates in Saratoga Springs. He was buried there yesterday.

Priests at the Saratoga rectory — St. Clement's House — said that Father Jamison had been with them for about three months. He

was sent to the infirmary from Tobyhanna, Pa., after having had a heart attack, a stroke and an automobile accident. He was 72 years old last June 9.

Father Jamison, a native of Brooklyn, worked in Puerto Rico, in West End, N.J., and Tobyhanna, as well as in this diocese. He was at Notre Dame Retreat House when it was located on Alexander

Street, took part in the building of the new house in Canandaigua and served there for some time.

Survivors include a sister, Helen, and two brothers, Paul, of Atlanta, Ga., and Arthur.

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### Sr. Margaret Gertrude, SSJ

The Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Margaret Gertrude O'Connor, SSJ, was celebrated Oct. 16 in the Motherhouse Chapel by Father Anthony Calimeri, who also gave the homily, and Father Joseph Reinhart.

Sister Margaret Gertrude, who was 86 years old, had entered the convent from Java Center in 1924 and had taught in the primary grades of parochial schools for 44 years. She worked at St. Francis de Sales, Geneva; St. Michael's, Penn Yan; Corpus Christi, Holy Apostles and Sacred Heart, Rochester; St. Alphonsus, Auburn; Immaculate Conception, Ithaca; St. Anthony's, Elmira, and St. Jerome's, East Rochester, an assignment of three years from which she retired in 1972.

Survivors are a sister, Ann O'Connor of Java Center.

### Sr. Mechtilde Becker, SSJ

Sister Mechtilde Becker, a Sister of St. Joseph for 65 years, died Oct. 17, 1979, at the age of 91. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Oct. 19 in the Motherhouse Chapel by Fathers Peter Bayer and Joseph Reinhart.

Sister Mechtilde, from Holy Redeemer Parish, joined the St. Joseph congregation in 1914 and taught in the schools of the diocese for 44 years, until ill health forced her retirement in 1959. She was at Sacred Heart, Perkinsville, for 21 years, then at St. Mary's, Dansville, for 21 years. She taught also at St. Mary's, Canandaigua, and St. Hyacinth, Auburn.

She is survived by 11 nieces and nephews.



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