



Bishop Matthew H. Clark presenting his statement on the shooting of Pope John Paul II.

Not First Attack For Holy Father Or the Papacy

New York (RNS) — The attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II at the Vatican was not the first serious threat on his life during his pontificate.

On Nov. 6, 1979, about 13 months after John Paul's election, a Swiss Guard wrestled a knife away from a man who approached a Vatican entrance demanding to see the pope because "I must kill him." The guard received a hand wound during the scuffle.

In the same month, during a visit to Turkey, John Paul travelled under extraordinary security because of several threats on his life from Moslem extremists.

In the history of the papacy, at least nine of 263 popes have died by assassins' hands. The last killing was in 1145, involving Pope Lucius II.

But though popes were threatened during and after the middle ages and on occasion held captive by rival princes seeking political leverage, no serious threats to popes' lives are recorded until the last two pontificates.

Most notable is a 1970 dagger attack on Pope Paul VI, then 73, at Manila Airport in the Philippines.

As the pontiff walked down a receiving line, a Bolivian fanatic dressed as a priest lunged at him with a 13-inch dagger.

Prompt action by the pope's personal secretary, Msgr. Pasquale Macchi, and others saved Paul VI from possible death. The assailant was wrestled to the ground and arrested.

The Vatican afterwards denied the pope was wounded by the attacker, but Msgr. Macchi was quoted as saying in the Milan Cathedral on Aug. 24, 1979, a year after Pope Paul VI died, that Paul had been "wounded in the

Bishop's Cable To Pope

Dear Holy Father — All of us in the diocese of Rochester join in prayer for your full and speedy recovery. May our union with you in suffering lead us to respond more fully to your constant call to work together to build up the Lord's Kingdom of Justice and Peace.

Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

chest." Until then there had been total Vatican silence on the incident.

During World War II, Pope Pius XII was allegedly the object of a Nazi kidnapping plot and fears were expressed for his safety at the Vatican during the height of fighting around Rome.

Here is a list of popes who died violently other than through martyrdom:

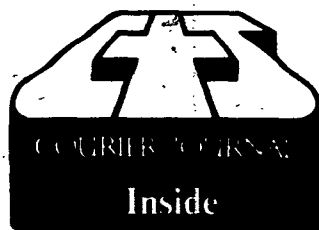
John VIII, who reigned from 872 to 882; Stephen VII, 896-97; Leo IV, 900-903; John X, 914-May 928; Leo VI, died Dec. 928; Stephen VIII, 928-31; Benedict VI, 973-74; John XIV, 983-84; Lucius II, 1144-45.

Three claimants to the papacy regarded by Roman Catholic authorities as "antipopes" also met violent deaths. They are: Constantine II, who died in 769; Christopher I, who died in 904; and Boniface II, who died in 985.



MAY DEVOTIONS

Irondequoit Knights of Columbus, Pope Pius XII, Council 4691, will hold its May devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, May 21 at St. Thomas the Apostle Church on St. Paul Blvd.



Calendar	21
Centering on Service	11
Child	4
Classified	23
Cuddy	6
Editorial	22
Hohman	21
Liturgy	20
Opinion	22
Parish News	20
Pope	17
RapAround	14-16
Shamon	10
Sisters Reflect	18
Southern Tier	9

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Bishop's Statement

Words cannot adequately express my sadness at the news that our Holy Father, John Paul II, has been shot.

I ask all members of our faith community and all citizens in the region to join in prayer for his full and speedy recovery.

As a lover of all of God's people, Pope John Paul II has been a constant and strong advocate of the God-given dignity of each human person. Consistent with this he has always called for non-violent and just means to address the evils of the world.

At this tragic hour, I can think of no better tribute to him than to call for a recommitment by all of us to promoting the dignity of every human person and to the pursuit of justice for God's poor.

May our sadness be untouched by hatred toward anyone. We must continue to live in faith that God's light penetrates even the darkness of this moment.

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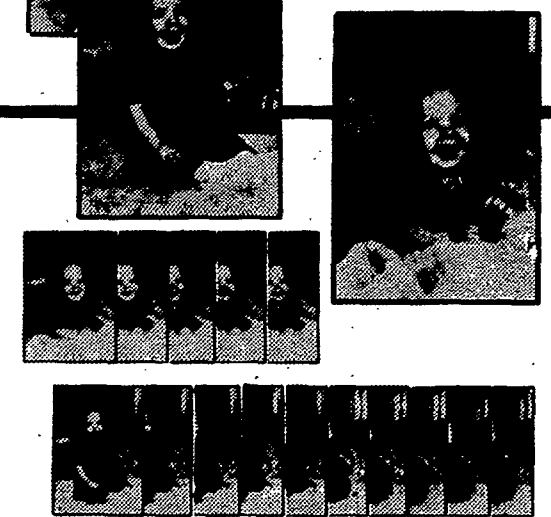
The Rochester Cenacle of the faithful will meet the first Wednesday of every month

at
St. Helen's Church
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The first meeting will be
June 3 at 7:30 p.m.

Come and pray to Mary for our Holy Father, our Bishop, for priests, and for vocations.

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