

Jesuits Calm But Wary As Pope Names Co-Leaders

Vatican City (RNS) — Jesuits here and around the world appear calm but wary about the unprecedented decision of Pope John Paul II to appoint two men to run the Society of Jesus until a new superior general can be elected.

The pope met Oct. 28 in a private audience with Father Paolo Dezza, the 79-year-old former general assistant of the Jesuits whom he has named his personal delegate to prepare for a new general congregation of the Catholic Church's largest religious order of priests.

Father Joseph Pittau, the provincial of the Jesuits in Japan named by the pope to assist Father Dezza, prepared to move to Rome from Tokyo early in November.

The 52-year-old Father Pittau has frequently been rumored as a possible candidate to succeed Father Pedro Arrupe, the general who last August suffered a serious stroke.

Observers here are speculating about what effect the pope's action may have upon the chances of Father Pittau being elected head of the Catholic Church's largest religious order of priests. He appears to have made a strong impression on John Paul when the pontiff visited Japan last February.

This was the first time in history that a pope chose to go outside the constitutions of the Society of Jesus to name his own choice to govern the order. However, popes have twice told Jesuit general congregations that they wanted to see a particular man elected.

The first time was in 1573 after three Spaniards in succession, including the Jesuit founder St. Ignatius of Loyola, had served as general. Pope Gregory XIII told the general congregation that a man of different nationality should be chosen and suggested Father Everard Mercurian, a Belgian. He was elected.

In 1687, Pope Innocent XI announced that he wanted Father Tirso Gonzalez, a Spaniard, as general. Again, the papal choice won the post.

In Spain, where news of the papal action first appeared in print, right-wing newspapers are portraying the decision as a victory for conservatives in the Jesuit order.

Roman newspapers have printed statements made by Jesuit provincials in France and in Canada who evidenced some discomfort with the pope's action.

Father Henri Madelin, superior of the French provinces, described the papal appointment as "a putting of our faith to the test" for Jesuits there. He urged members of the society to welcome these decisions "in a spirit of faith (and) loving humility."

"The period into which we are entering is delicate," Father Madelin said. "The society, which has its own weaknesses and particular characteristics, ought not to try to justify itself. Even more, it should not try to erect a rival 'church' to the true Church."

In Montreal, superiors of the French-speaking and English-speaking provinces of Canadian Jesuits held a joint press conference to explain the situation to newsmen.

Father William Ryan, English Canadian provincial, said it was difficult to get the society's ideas across to the pope who, he said, is used to living in a totalitarian regime in Poland "and doesn't have the same view of the world that we in capitalist regimes do."

"We've got to get to know this pope and the way he thinks," Father Ryan asserted. He said, however, that since Father Dezza had announced the next general would be chosen in an election conducted according to the Jesuit constitutions, he saw no reasons for any fear that the pope would attempt to appoint his own choice as successor.

"It's unprecedented but maybe it's a good thing, maybe it's what we need right now," he added.

Father Julian Harvey, former provincial of the French Canadian Jesuits, explained that within the society, there are two views of priestly work. Some members think a priest should concentrate on pastoral ministry and others believe he should engage in ministries for social justice and even get involved in politics.

Father Ryan, who before being named provincial was a member of the staff of the Center for Concern, the American social justice program, said both the Jesuits and the pope are united in their emphasis on ministry to the poor and work for peace and justice.

American Jesuits, while reluctant to make statements, appear to be somewhat perturbed that the pope's action displaced Father Vincent O'Keefe, the American general assistant whom Father Arrupe had named his temporary vicar general after he became ill.

IRISH FAMILIES

Persons interested in forming an Irish family history organization are invited to attend an organizational meeting at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 19, at Bishop Kearney High School. The purpose of the group is to exchange genealogical information and aid persons in establishing Irish family origins.

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All in the Family



A Common Kind of Disability

This is the International Year of the Disabled Person and when I am reminded of it, it strikes me that I do not personally know a great many people who are physically or mentally impaired.

Still, I know a lot of handicapped people. They walk beside me in the shopping malls, sit next to me in community meetings and church, exchange pleasantries over the phone and sometimes persist in staring back at me when I look in the mirror.

I speak of the emotionally disabled. And, the truth is that most of us are or have been at some time or another so afflicted — in varying degrees.

In many cases, those of us so disadvantaged live out our lives with more agitation and misery than those whose limbs or organs or brain may not function properly but whose hearts and minds are at peace with themselves and the world.

Some of us emotionally disabled are chronically

depressed, maybe not enough to require shock therapy or mind elevating drugs, only enough to color the world gray on more days than not.

Some of us are incapable of expressing love; of either giving it or receiving it and are bound by anonymous fears buried so deeply they are seldom uprooted.

Then there are those of us who have so little self-esteem that every word, every phrase, every sentence out of our mouths is filled with prejudice against some individual or some group in an attempt to pull them down to what we think is our own level.

And some of us live with constant anxiety, our inner selves shriveled always by the possibility that

something untoward may occur.

A woman I know suffered from the last for most of her life until the day it dawned on her that she had been praying for the wrong thing. She said she had prayed all her life that the Lord would keep her and her loved ones safe from all the horrible things that could happen. And He had. Still, anxieties ruled her life. Then she began praying for something else: That the Lord would help her trust Him.

From then on her life began to change and slowly the fears that dominated her have been eroded. Not overnight, of course. But as her prayers continued, her trust increased.

Listening to her, it

occurred to me that many, if not most, emotional ills are spiritual ailments — a rather hopeful thing, on the whole, since all of us hold within our grasp the means to seek our own cure.

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