

# The Church Today

# Our Catholic Heritage

## The Church Continues — Purified, Revitalized

By MSGR. JAMES F. CONNELLY

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Within a period of 78 days, Peter's keys were transferred from Pope Paul VI (d. Aug. 6, 1978) to Pope John Paul I (Aug. 26 - d. Sept. 28) to Pope John Paul II (elected Oct. 16, 1978). All were men of the Second Vatican Council and all were charged with carrying out the teachings of that Council with the full power of their office as Vicar of Christ.

Pope Paul VI spoke often on human rights, peace and the "legitimate freedom" of religion. Pope John Paul I died suddenly in the shortest papal reign since the 17th century. He will be remembered only as the "Pope with the smile." He did not have time to address the major problems which confront today's Church.

Pope John Paul II reaffirmed the teachings of the Council and encour-

aged the continuing reforms in the Church since the Council. He realized that the years after the Second Vatican Council saw the most tumult in the Church since the days of the Protestant Reformation.

The vast majority of Catholics accepted the changes decreed by the Council, even in the areas of liturgy and ecumenism. Some, however, thought that many of the changes were unwarranted. They refused, for example, to exercise their option of receiving Holy Communion in the hand. They refused to receive Holy Communion from the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. They were apathetic about the new rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Some others, a determined group, refused even to accept the Second Vatican Council and wanted a return to the Church of the Council of Trent.

Others wanted even more changes and those as quickly as possible, with or without papal approval. Recently, there have been enthusiastic groups who want women priests, deaco-

nesses (the permanent diaconate was restored), and a married clergy.

Such groups — both of the right and of the left — brought about, and are still continuing, a crisis of authority within the Church, and a crisis of identity for themselves. Some of the faithful, including priests and nuns, became confused and began to follow individual theologians, even when those theologians were opposed to the teaching and dogma of the Church.

It is Pope John II's challenge to unite these dissident groups within the Church. With an easy style and charismatic personality, he set about on pastoral visitations of the Church throughout the world. His messages on those visits point out the problems which confront the Church today. In Mexico (1979), he highlighted the social needs and the poverty of the peoples of the Third World, and faced the question of "liberation theology." While in Poland (1979), he fearlessly preached the basic rights of the Church and of the human freedom.

During his stop-over in Ireland (1979), he begged for non-violence. In the United States, he lamented false values, which destroy a person, such as materialism, abortion, and the disregard for family life. He also emphasized the permanent priestly commitment of celibacy and a male priesthood. He begged for vocations, the lack of which is one of the most pressing problems of today's Church. On his trip to Japan (1981), he prayed for an end to the nuclear arms race.

Pope John Paul II has made the faithful realize that the Church has been renewed in our day. In her laws, her liturgy, her social concerns, her methods of spreading the good news, she changed — but not in her essential beliefs.

Even after his near fatal wounds, Pope John Paul II is leading the Church as she readies herself again — as she always will — to continue her early pilgrimage, purified and revitalized, to meet her bridegroom, the glorified Christ!

## A Pope and a Nun Who Fascinate the World

By MSGR. JAMES F. CONNELLY

The papal election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Cardinal-Archbishop of Krakow, Poland on Oct. 16, 1978 was a surprise. Pope John Paul II is the first non-Italian pope since the 16th century, and the first Polish pope in history.

Pope John Paul II was born in Wasowice on May 18, 1920, to a working-class family. Before he was ordained a priest in 1946, he had been an aspiring actor and poet, a laborer in a chemical factory, and in hiding from the Gestapo.

Pope John Paul II captured the hearts of the faithful. He displayed a charismatic optimism, joy, and concern for all peoples. People saw him as a pope who had an easy rapport with youth; a pope who held tenaciously to the traditional beliefs of the Church, while at the same time preaching against all injustice.

This pope saw the whole world as his parish. Indeed, in his first two-and-one-half years as pope he visited 21 countries, including the United States. He also had time to write three encyclicals: "Redemptor Hominis," "Dives in Misericordia," and "Laborem Exercens." An imaginative, compassionate, Christian humanist, a fore of violence and of terrorism, Pope John Paul II was gravely wounded by an international terrorist on May 13, 1981. It took weeks for him to recover from his wounds.

If Pope John Paul II rekindled the interest of the world in the Catholic Church, Mother Teresa of Cal-

cutta reawakened that noble charity which lies in the hearts of all people.



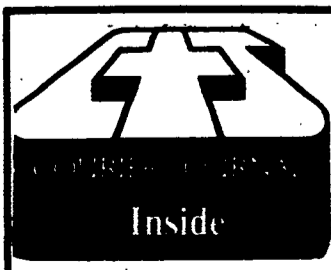
Mother Teresa of Calcutta (Art by Robert McGovern)

Mother Teresa was born on Aug. 27, 1910, in Skopje, Yugoslavia. She came from a family of Albanian Catholic descent in a Turkish dominated land.

When she was 18, she entered the Sisters of Loreto in Dublin, Ireland. From Ireland she was sent to the Sisters' novitiate in Darjeeling, India, where she took her first vows in 1931. In 1946, she left the Sisters of Loreto, with the permission of the Church, to live among the poor of Calcutta. In 1950, Pope Pius XII approved the new congregation which she founded, the Missionaries of Charity, as a diocesan congregation. Fifteen years later the Missionaries received pontifical status and so many postulants that Mother Teresa had to move the mother house into more spacious quarters.

Today, there are more than 2,000 Missionary Sisters of Charity who labor with love for the poor, the abandoned and the dying destitute in India and throughout the world. In 1963, Mother Teresa founded the Missionary Brothers of Charity, and in 1969 Pope Paul VI gave his blessing to the International Association of Co-Workers of Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. It was an honor richly deserved for that humble, prayerful woman religious. She and her missionaries see in the poor, the homeless, the dying destitute, the abandoned, the lepers, the unwanted Jesus Christ, the King of Peace. Her attitude and that of her Missionaries was summed up by one of her sisters: "When I wash that leper's wounds, I feel that I am nursing the Lord Himself." The Pope and the nun have fascinated the world.



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