

DATELINE: VATICAN CITY

Pope Surprises Cardinals, Announces Holy Year

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II surprised Church and civil authorities Nov. 26 when he ended a meeting of the world's cardinals by proclaiming 1983 as a special Holy Year.

The unusual meeting, called by the pope to report to the cardinals and solicit their advice on several of the Church's key concerns, was only the second such convocation in the modern history of the Church. The first, also called by John Paul, was in November 1979.

The four-day assembly was attended by 97 of the world's 120 cardinals. The pope proclaimed the Holy Year to celebrate the 1,950th anniversary of the year of the redemption, when Christ died on the cross.

Normally, Holy Years are celebrated every 25 years; the last one was in 1975.

Such a year is marked by special prayers and pilgrimages.

A communique, issued by the Vatican Press Office, listed the topics of the cardinals' meeting which included reform of the Vatican Curia, the Church's central administration; the soon-to-be promulgated new code of canon law; the financial situation of the Holy See; and activities of the Vatican Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship and the pontifical commissions of the family and on culture.

Also included in the communique was the full text of a report given the cardinals by papal Secretary of State Agostino Casaroli on relations between the Vatican bank and the Banco Ambrosiano, Italy's largest private bank before it was declared bankrupt earlier this year.

Cardinal Agenda

Reform the Curia.
New code of canon law.
Vatican finances.
Sacraments and Divine Worship.
Pontifical commissions.

The Vatican bank is also called the IOR, the Italian abbreviation for its formal name, the Institute for the Works of Religion. The Cardinal Casaroli report indicated that a three-man team of banking experts concluded that the IOR had no legal responsibility through its "letters of patronage" for the collapse of Banco Ambrosiano. The report said, however, that the banking experts, who were appointed by the Vatican in July and completed their work in early September, felt that their study of the entire Ambrosiano affair "did not yet have a completely conclusive character" and suggested cooperation with Italian banking authorities for further research into the links between the IOR and Banco Ambrosiano.

The pope, in his closing address to the cardinals, spoke of Italian-Vatican cooperation on the Ambrosiano affair and promised that "the Holy See is prepared to take all the steps required for an agreement on the part of both sides so that the whole truth can come to light."

While the reform of the curia is still in the planning stages and no specific resolutions were drafted by the

cardinals, Church sources told NC that substantial changes are anticipated in the Church's administrative structure to assure a more efficient operation.

The financial report presented to the cardinals noted a deficit of \$28 million in the operation of the Church's central administration in 1981. The closing communique indicated, however, that the deficit had been balanced by Peter's Pence contributions from the world's Catholics and by other unspecified donations.

Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York said that the meeting discussed methods for the more efficient financial management of the curia's operations. He indicated that cardinals from missionary countries were among those anxious to increase their local contributions to the annual Peter's Pence collection for overall Church operation. Traditionally, Catholics in the United States and West Germany have provided the strongest financial support.

Cardinal Cooke and Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia said that the meeting had brought the Vatican a step closer to the publication of an audit of its annual balance sheet. They served on the special 15-member commission of cardinals appointed in 1981 to meet regularly on Vatican finances and organization. This commission met just before the full session of cardinals.

The plenary meeting discussed the new code of canon law, which will govern the Church's administrative and pastoral activity and will replace the present code, in use since 1917. The cardinals were given a month to submit further suggestions to the Vatican on the topics discussed.

Cardinal Krol said that the pope wants the code to be promulgated "in the shortest possible time."

St. John Lateran: Outdoor Mass Concelebrated

Vatican City (NC) — Franciscan evangelizers, Catholic students, specialists in family life, cardinals and the start of a new church year all played a part in the activities of Pope John Paul Nov. 25-28.

Although the pope devoted much of his attention to the plenary assembly of the College of Cardinals, which ended Nov. 26, he also found time during the four days for a visit to Rome's St. Lateran, one of the city's four major basilicas and his cathedral church as Bishop of Rome.

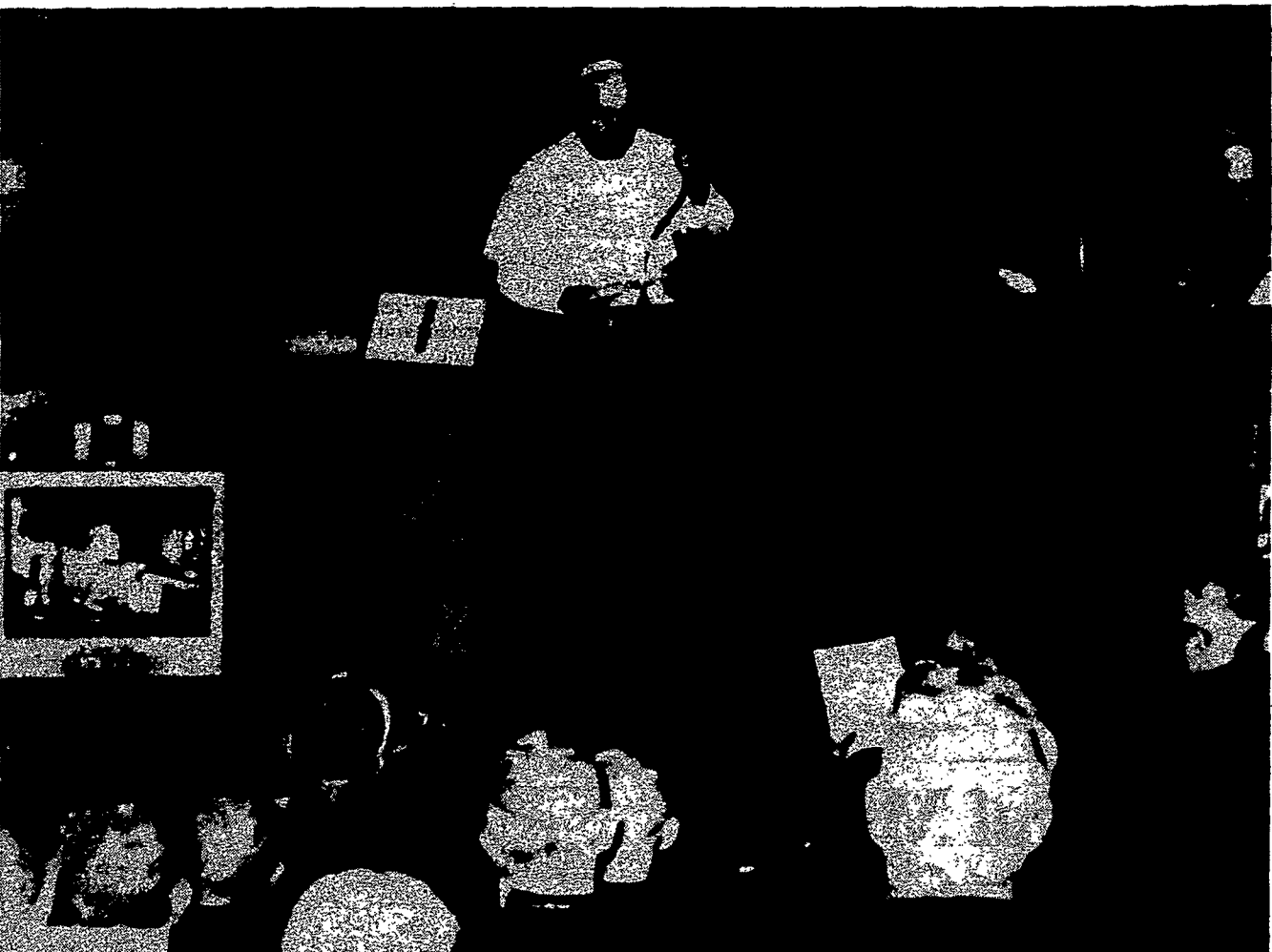
The pope began the liturgical season of Advent with a concelebrated Mass Nov. 28 outside St. John Lateran. The Mass, celebrated with Cardinal Ugo Poletti, papal vicar for Rome, several

bishops and about 100 priests, marked the close of the two-week-long Mission to the People, carried out by Franciscans in 34 Rome parishes.

During the mission, more than 1,000 Franciscan priests, nuns and brothers visited the homes of many of the 600,000 people living within the parish boundaries and preached at the local churches on the message of St. Francis of Assisi.

The day before, the pope met with thousands of students from two Catholic schools in Rome which were celebrating their 100th and 76th anniversaries.

On Nov. 26, the pope met with 76 participants in the European Conference on Family Ministry.



Pope John Paul II addresses the opening session of the College of Cardinals Nov. 23. Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, right, Vatican secretary of state, and Cardinal Carlo Confalonieri, dean of the Sacred College, flank the pope. (RNS Photo)

Opus Dei Permanent Prelature Now

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II formalized Nov. 27 the three-month-old decision to make Opus Dei a personal prelature and named 68-year-old Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo its first prelate.

The papal move announced Aug. 23 by the Vatican Press office means that the international Catholic organizations of priests and laity will be guided by the prelate in matters of formation and apostolate but will remain under the direction of local bishops in other respects of its activities.

The formal establishment of Opus Dei as a personal prelature, the first set up under guidelines issued after the Second Vatican Council, was contained in a declaration

of Aug. 23 signed by Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, and Archbishop Lucas Moreira Neves, the congregation's secretary.

The declaration released Nov. 27 says that the change in Opus Dei's status answers "particular pastoral and evangelization needs of our time" and that it accomplishes "a harmonious grafting of the institution itself into the pastoral program of the universal church and local churches and makes service to them more effective."

Opus Dei (Latin for "work of God") is an apostolic group of priests and laity founded in Spain in 1928 and approved by the Vatican as a secular institute in 1950. Its members

include 70,000 lay people and 1,200 priests from 87 nations.

Along with the declaration, the Vatican published a commentary by Cardinal Baggio, describing the "three-and-a-half years of assiduous labor" which went into consultations about the new status.

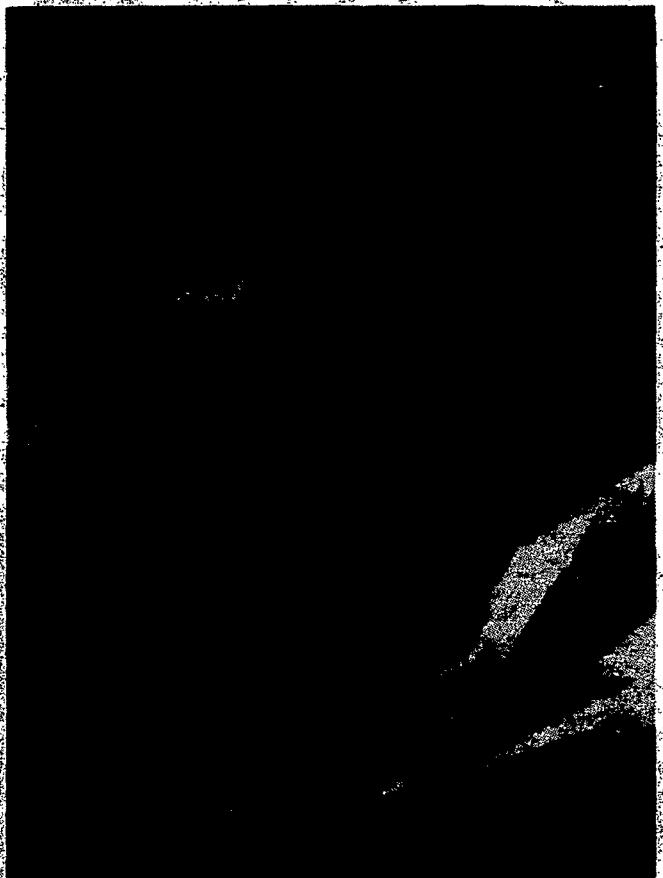
After the matter was entrusted to the bishops' congregation by Pope John Paul in 1979, Cardinal Baggio said, a technical commission was formed to examine the "historical, juridical and pastoral, institutional and procedural aspects of the question."

On Sept. 28, 1981, "a note on the essential characteristics of the prelature" was sent to

bishops in countries where Opus Dei is active and the bishops' responses were studied, Cardinal Baggio said.

The cardinal indicated that the creation of the prelature will not have a substantial effect on the organization's day-to-day life. The move was needed because Opus Dei "had not yet found in the organizational structures of the people of God the adequate ecclesial configuration," he said.

Opus Dei describes itself as "an association of the faithful, whose members dedicate themselves entirely to the apostolate and to the practice of an intense spiritual life without abandoning their own social environment or the exercise of their profession or secular occupation."



Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, left, and Cardinal Stephanos Sideronis I, patriarch of Alexandria, at the cardinals' meeting in the Vatican Synod Hall. (NC Photo)