

Is Pope Fully Recovered?

'He's full of pep and energy . . . taking into account all he's been through, I think he's done magnificently . . .'

By Nancy Frazier

VATICAN CITY (NC) — Two years after an assassination attempt that nearly cost him his life, has Pope John Paul II fully recovered?

"He's full of pep and energy," said a high Vatican official who often sees the pope. "Taking into account all he's been through, I think he's done magnificently."

"He's fine. He looks well, even though he's not my patient anymore," said Dr. Francesco Crucitti, head of the surgical team which performed two operations on the pope at Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic in 1981.

"He doesn't seem any more tired than anyone else with his schedule would," said an American priest in Rome, who saw the pope on May 13, 1981, in St. Peter's Square, the day the murder attempt took place.

Doctors predicted that it would take two years for their patient to recover his full strength.

Many Vatican observers believed that the pale and weakened man who emerged from the Gemelli Polyclinic in early August 1981 after a 77-day hospital stay would never resume the hectic pace and worldwide travels that had previously marked his pontificate.

But Pope John Paul, whose 63rd birthday is May 18, has shown a greater stamina than many other men his age.

The only obvious physical change in him is a loss of about 10 pounds from his pre-May 1981 weight. The pope lost 20 pounds during his hospitalization and regained only half of that.

"He's thinned down a little, yes, but I think he's keeping it that way intentionally," said the Vatican official, who asked not to be named.

Crucitti applauded the pope's lower weight, saying "he was overweight" before the shooting.

The American priest, who also asked not to be named, has met with Pope John Paul every six months over the

past two years and has seen a steady improvement in the pope's appearance.

"The first time I saw him after the shooting his color wasn't good and he seemed to be experiencing a great deal of discomfort," he said.

"Even six months ago, he sat throughout a brief audience," the priest added. "But this time he stood the whole time, during a longer audience, and didn't seem agitated or in a hurry. His spirit is up and there's a bit more of a spring in his step."

A journalist who often accompanies Pope John Paul on his Sunday parish visits in Rome thinks the shooting has had a greater psychological than physical effect on the pope.

"Basically, he's recovered as much as he's going to," she said. "But it seems like some kind of spunk, which is maybe more psychological than physical, has gone out of him."

No official report on the pope's health was made public on May 13, the second anniversary of the assassination attempt.

But based on "the external aspect," Crucitti, who recently had an audience with the pope, gives his former patient a clean bill of health.

Two years ago, the surgeon had predicted that surgery would be required on the pope's left forefinger, two bones of which were shattered by the bullet which also went through his right forearm.

Even though the surgery was never performed on the finger, "it is perfectly healed," Crucitti said.

The Vatican official dismisses claims that the effects of the assassination attempt have slowed down Pope John Paul or have changed his style.

"For a fellow who they say hasn't recovered, he keeps up an incredible pace," the official said.



One indication of the pope's stamina is his schedule of trips outside Italy. There have been 17 so far, and likely future stops include Poland, Austria, southern Africa, Switzerland and Canada.

In the two years and eight months before the attempt on his life, Pope John Paul took nine trips involving 17 countries. Since he was shot, he has made eight trips to a total of 18 countries.

The most recent papal trip, to Central America and Haiti, had an especially exhausting schedule and left many papal aides and members of the Vatican press corps sunburned and exhausted.

But Pope John Paul looked almost as cheerful and alert at the end of the trip as he had at the beginning.

Indications are that the pope, once dubbed "Cyclone Wojtyla" by the Italian press, has no plans to slow down.

The second anniversary passed quietly but not unnoticed at the Vatican, where Pope John Paul celebrated Mass in his private chapel for a group of doctors and nurses who had treated him at the Gemelli Polyclinic.

In a front-page editorial May 13, L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican daily newspaper, described the 1981 shooting as "a supreme and horrendous attack against love, carried out not so much by the hand of one or more men, but by the conspiracy of hate and all its manifestations and projects and its unmotivated destructive proposals."

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Cdl. Silva Retires; Fought for Rights

Santiago, Chile (NC) — Pope John Paul accepted May 6 the resignation of Cardinal Raul Silva as Archbishop of Santiago, Chile.

The cardinal had headed the Chilean church during volatile political times which saw a Christian Democratic president democratically replaced by a Marxist president who was subsequently overthrown in a bloody military coup.

Cardinal Silva, who reached the retirement age of 75 last Sept. 27, had been archbishop of Santiago since March 1961. A Salesian priest since 1938, he was ordained a bishop in 1959 and headed the Diocese of Valparaiso for two years.

The pope named Archbishop Juan Francisco Fresno Larrain of La Serena, a 68-year-old native of Santiago, to succeed him.

Cardinal Silva gained an international reputation as a leader of the Chilean people and a bold spokesman for human rights and the poor.

His stands on freedom to preach the Gospel, church unity, domestic peace, social justice and human solidarity gained him respect inside Chile and abroad.

While archbishop of Santiago, Cardinal Silva witnessed profound changes in Chilean society, particularly in the political life of the South American nation of 11.5 million people.

He was a supporter of political reforms advocated by Eduardo Frei, Christian Democratic president from 1964-70. In January 1966, the cardinal favored a wide-ranging land reform bill signed into law by Frei. Some criticized the bill as discriminating against large landowners and others said that it did not conform to the church's social teaching. Cardinal Silva, however, said the law basically agreed with church teachings.

In July 1969, the cardinal congratulated Frei over the agreement between the Chilean government and the U.S. Anaconda Copper Company concerning expropriation of Anaconda properties in Chile. The cardinal said the acquisition of the property in a two-stage expropriation with compensation was "of extraordinary national importance."

In 1970, Salvador Allende, a Marxist, was elected president by a plurality in a tight three-man race. Just before his installation as president, Allende visited Cardinal Silva. Afterward the cardinal said that the church in Chile was "willing to give all the help they can to the president in his labor of public service."

Soon, however, Allende's programs on education, economics and civil rights clashed with church positions, but the cardinal and the Chilean bishops managed to avoid open confrontation.

In October 1971, after Allende had nationalized five large copper mines owned by U.S.-based corporations, Cardinal Silva appealed to the people and government of the United States to understand Chile's desire to control its primary natural resource.

Domestically, the Allende presidency was turbulent and politically polarized Chileans. The country was marked by strikes protesting triple-digit inflation and Allende's efforts to legislate the country into a Marxist-inspired socialism and by pro-government demonstrations asking for a crackdown on dissenters.

Cardinal Silva failed in efforts to mediate between Allende and opposition political leaders and in September



CARDINAL SILVA

1973 there was a bloody military coup in which thousands of people, including Allende, died. The church acted as a force to soften anti-Marxist purges and protect human rights in the aftermath of the coup.

Four days after the coup, the Chilean bishops, headed by Cardinal Silva, issued an appeal for clemency toward Allende officials and supporters.

Cardinal Silva reiterated the position the church had taken during Allende's tenure: defense of social gains for the poor and democratic freedoms.

In October 1976 at Independence Day ceremonies in Santiago's cathedral, Cardinal Silva pleaded for justice and freedom before the assembled military junta.

"Peace is tranquility in order," he said, "but both are impossible to attain without freedom... A nation holding law and order above freedom is not a people, but a mass."

The cardinal called on the junta to return the country to democratic government. The plea came after numerous international human rights organizations and governments had criticized the Chilean military, accusing it of murdering and torturing political opponents.

Ten months earlier, Cardinal Silva had established the archdiocesan Vicariate of Solidarity primarily to aid the politically persecuted, investigate cases of missing persons and press the government for information concerning the missing. He established the vicariate after the junta dissolved the ecumenical Committee for Peace, which aided prisoners following the 1973 coup.

In 1978, the vicariate received the United Nations Human Rights Prize and Yale University awarded Cardinal Silva an honorary divinity degree for his defense of human rights. At the Yale ceremony, Cardinal Silva said the defense of human rights "is central to evangelization today."

Will Anyone Listen?

The debate had ended; the lopsided vote was about to be announced. As their Chicago meeting was drawing to a close, several of the bishops got carried away in describing the importance and quality of their statement on war and peace.

The final document can be respected for what it is; it doesn't have to be equated with the Gospel of St. John or the Declaration of Independence.

It contains some weaknesses; it will cause some problems. But it is probably as good a statement as you could hope for from a body of more than 250 bishops.

The pastoral involved a great amount of work. The bishops were deeply concerned about their duty to speak responsibly on the moral issues involved in nuclear weapons. They did their work with admirable openness and dignity.

So now we have a strong, authoritative teaching document in which the bishops clearly oppose some aspects of national policy.

What will be the likely effects of their teaching?

● **In national policy.** The Reagan administration will not do an about-face on nuclear strategy because of the judgments in this pastoral. Some government spokesmen will probably disparage the document as naive and unrealistic.

Politically, however, the administration and congress will have to give serious weight to this statement as an expression of a mounting public opinion in the United States.

The bishops are not

wild-eyed extremists. The deep concern which motivated their effort and the judgments they have reached must be seen as evidence of a growing, widespread dissatisfaction with present policies and performance.

Candidates for national office need not fear that Catholics will vote as a bloc, but a prudent candidate will recognize that this pastoral represents a growing current of public opinion shared by people of different religious traditions.

● **Among Catholics.** My guess is that few Catholics who have strong convictions — supporting or rejecting our nuclear strategy — will change their minds because of this statement.

The pastoral is an exercise of teaching authority in the church, but I think we are beyond the time when most Catholics would say, "Though I saw things differently, I now accept this position because the bishops have proclaimed it."

I have no doubt that some Catholics in government, in the military, in munitions industries will become more troubled in conscience.

In the long run, our public policy will be determined not by the Catholic bishops, nor by the Catholic community. But this pastoral and the subsequent preaching and teaching within the Catholic community will have a significant impact on the shaping of the political will of the nation.

Ultimately, the nation should demand that our public officials give the very highest priority — before tax cuts, a balanced budget, or anything else — to the effort to move away, responsibly, from the escalating threat of nuclear war.