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Boston Archbishop

Pope Chooses Bernard Law Noted Ecumenical Leader

Washington (NC) -- Boston's new Archbishop Bernard F. Law is a Harvard graduate known nationally for his ecumenical activity and in his home Missouri diocese for his pastoral directness.

Pope John Paul II promoted Archbishop Law from the small Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, with 52,000 Catholics, to head the 1.9 million Catholics of the Boston Archdiocese on Jan. 24. He

succeeds Cardinal Humberto S. Medeiros, who died Sept. 17.

Archbishop Law, 52, has received national attention in the past three years as the director of the special, ecumenically delicate U.S. program for admitting into the priesthood married Episcopal priests who convert to Catholicism.

Before he became bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau in 1973, he had been executive director of the

Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs from 1968-71, and as a bishop he chaired the BCEIA in the late 1970s.

He is also a member of the Vatican's Secretariat for Christian Unity and served from 1976-81 as a consultant to the secretariat's Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism.

In the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocese, where Catholics make up only a 20th of the area's total popu-

lation, he is known as a pastorally direct man who frequently visits parishes and gets involved in parish life. Before administering confirmation, for example, he often led retreats for the young people to be confirmed.

As a priest in the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson (now simply Jackson), Miss., the new Boston archbishop was editor of the diocesan newspaper from 1963-68 and diocesan vicar general 1971-73.

The son of a career Air Force officer, the late Col. Bernard A. Law, Bernard Francis Law was born abroad -- in Torreon, Mexico, on Nov. 4, 1931 -- and traveled widely as a child. He attended elementary schools in New York, Florida, Georgia, and Barranquilla, Colombia.

He graduated from Charlotte Amalie High School in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

In 1953 he completed college at Harvard University in Cambridge, a Boston suburb. He then began studies for the priesthood, studying at St. Joseph Seminary in St. Benedict, La., 1953-55, and at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, Ohio, 1955-61.

Ordained for the Natchez-Jackson Diocese on May 21, 1961, Father Law spent two years as assistant pastor of St. Paul's Church in Vicksburg, Miss., and then was named editor of the diocesan newspaper, The Mississippi Register. The paper now is called Mississippi Today.

In 1968 he was released from diocesan duties to become executive director of the BCEIA. He was called to that post to succeed a priest who had just been named bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau -- now Cardinal William Wakefield Baum, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education.

He received the title of monsignor in 1969 and in 1971 returned to Jackson as vicar general. Two years later, shortly after Cardinal Baum was promoted from bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau to archbishop of Washington, Msgr. Law again succeeded him, this time as head of the southern Missouri diocese.

As head of Boston, the see with third largest Catholic population in the country after Los Angeles and Chicago, Archbishop Law could eventually follow Cardinal Baum into the College of Cardinals.

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On arriving at his weekly general audience at the Vatican, Pope John Paul II greets a group of U.S. sailors and Marines from the carrier Independence who recently returned to Naples after service off Lebanon. (NC Photo)

U.S. Lebanon Forces On Mission of Peace, Pope Tells Crewmen

Vatican City (NC) -- Pope John Paul II met 800 crew members of a U.S. aircraft carrier stationed near Beirut, Lebanon, Jan. 25 and described their assignment as a "mission of peace" in a war-torn area.

"I know that what you have experienced as part of a mission of peace will have lasting effects in your own lives," the pope told members of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps from the USS Kennedy during his talk in the Vatican's Clementine Hall.

"You have been close to the evil of hatred and its worst expression, which is war. At the same time you have shared the dream of countless ordinary and upright people for peace and reconciliation, and for that harmony and brotherhood which transcend all diversity and differences," the pope said.

"Your own presence was intended to help create conditions to favor peace. Responding to an invitation of the

Lebanese government, you and peace force members from other countries endeavored to offer the collaboration of peace to a war-torn zone," he said.

The ship, with a crew of 5,800, is part of a four-nation peacekeeping force that includes troops from Italy, Great Britain and France. It arrived in Naples, Italy, Jan. 23 and is expected to leave for Beirut Jan. 29, according to a spokesman for the group.

At the end of the talk, the pope shook hands and spoke to some of the group and accepted a brass plaque of the ship's emblem.

One crew member handed Pope John Paul a squadron baseball cap. Few in the group were in uniform, and several were accompanied by relatives who had joined them in Naples.

They applauded loudly when the pope departed from his prepared speech and said: "God bless you, your families, your lives and your service. God bless America."



N.Y. Times Report 'Nothing but Air'

Vatican City (NC) -- The Vatican has denied accusations contained in a New York Times article that it systematically helped Nazi war criminals escape from Europe after World War II.

The denial was issued Jan. 29 by Father Romeo Panciroli, Vatican press officer. He cited press comments by two Jesuit historians criticizing the Times article.

"I point out to you what was said in this regard by Father Robert Graham, an authoritative scholar on this subject, and Father Pierre Blet, equally expert, who have already given a sufficiently clear response to questions on this case," Father Panciroli said in a brief, hand-written statement given to reporters.

U.S.-born Father Graham, staff member of the Jesuit magazine Civiltà Cattolica in Rome, and French-born Father Blet, on the faculty of

the Gregorian University in Rome, were two of the scholars assigned by Pope Paul VI 20 years ago to study and publish Vatican documents on World War II.

On Jan. 26 the Times published an investigative report saying Vatican agencies played a key role in helping Nazis escape from Europe. It cited two main sources, a recently declassified 1947 U.S. State Department report and statements by Serge Klarsfeld, a Paris lawyer who has specialized in tracking down fugitive Nazis.

Father Graham was quoted by the Italian news agency ANSA as saying statements in the State Department report were "propagandist maneuvers" by people who "never miss the chance to crucify" the Catholic Church.

"The accusations in the report are founded on nothing but air," he added.

'Faith Today' Section Resumes Next Week

"Faith Today," the special Courier-Journal section of religious and educational features, does not appear in this week's edition. It will return as the Courier center section next week.

Center Section