

Pope Visit to Switzerland

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enthusiastic congregation, the pope declared that "a local church cannot exist unless it is in communion with the others, unless it is open to the sufferings and joys of the other local churches, unless it seeks to be in harmony with them."

Unlike other papal trips outside Italy, the pope was greeted and guarded by Swiss Guards in their ceremonial dress.

Noting the guards dressed in the uniform designed by Michelangelo, the pope recalled that "through many centuries, young Swiss citizens have served the successor of Peter in his many apostolic duties, faithfully and even at the cost of their lives."

The pope also noted Switzerland's neutral status in world politics through which, he said, the country "has secured long years of peace and social progress and also has made possible the expansion of humanitarian work especially in times of international conflict."

At Fribourg on the second day of his journey, Pope John Paul II warned scientists to control "terrifying instruments of destruction and death" and has told Catholic theologians to stay within the bounds of church teachings.

A "growing number of scientists" are worried by changes that "risk compromising gravely the complex and delicate balance of nature," the pope told about 500 students and faculty members at the University of Fribourg.

"They are worried by the technical achievements capable of becoming terrifying instruments of destruction and death," he said.

The pope also asked scientists to seek greater independence.

"Scientific work should not be so dependent on immediate goals, on business claims or economic interests," he added.

After the morning meeting at the university, the pope told Swiss Catholic theology professors to avoid "theses which are not officially recognized and have not yet been matured."

Catholic theologians do not have complete autonomy, the pope said. They should not act on their own accord but should submit their research for evaluation by "learned men outside the bounds of a theological school or of a country," he added.

Throughout the cool, sunny day, the pope spoke to primarily French-speaking Catholics in the medieval city of Fribourg, Switzerland's Catholic intellectual center founded in 1889.

Afterward, the pope met Swiss Catholic theology professors and told them that they had to study controversial issues but that they should approach them with discretion and not publicize private opinions as if they were official church teachings. He added that they must work in union with the bishops and with himself.

Theologians "are not called to be judges, but to be loyal colleagues of those who, through their office, have the duty of unity for all," he said. "Theologians must also be able to accept the fact that from their level, they cannot solve all the problems that are presented to them."

The pope also cautioned theologians about making their work public before it has been properly evaluated.

Theological research "would therefore profit from being reviewed by other scholars beyond the boundaries of a particular theological school or country before being presented to the general public," he said.

"One must be careful not to confuse those believers who are less instructed in questions of faith by presenting them with theses which are not officially recognized and are at times still immature and insufficiently nuanced," he added.

At a press conference afterward, Bishop Henri Schwery, president of the Swiss bishops' conference, and five of the professors who attended the meeting said that issues brought up by the theologians were the shortage of priests, the possibility of ordaining women, and the role of women in the church. Dominican Father John Dominic Barthelemy, professor of Old Testament at the University of Fribourg, said that the pope made no response to these issues.

The pope also attended a brief meeting with representatives of the Jewish community which comprises 0.3 percent of Switzerland's population. He urged the Jewish leaders to work for a "peace founded on justice, respect for the rights of all."

Robert Braunschweig, president of the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, praised the improving relations between

Catholics and Jews and expressed "hope for the day when normal relations will exist between the Vatican state and the state of Israel, so that the exchange of diplomatic representatives becomes a matter of fact."

At Bern on June 14, the pope repeated his call for Christian unity in a talk to members of a Swiss ecumenical group but restated his position that there could be no joint Eucharist until Catholic and Protestant churches reached a "complete agreement on faith."

The pope surprised some of his listeners by asking rhetorically whether women have "the place today in society and church which the creator intended for them."

Women are barred by canon law from the Catholic priesthood.

Several Protestant groups, including Lutheran, Methodist and Episcopal churches, ordain women.

The pope made his comments in a talk to members of the Community of Christian Churches in Switzerland, an organization which includes Catholics and most Protestant denominations.

"We are all praying incessantly that the Lord will lead us together in the visible form of the one catholic and apostolic church," Pope John Paul told the church leaders.

But he said that agreeing to a joint Eucharist at this point in inter-church relations would "send delusive signals." A common eucharistic celebration is possible only with "complete agreement in faith," he said.

On June 14 he praised ecumenical efforts but reiterated his position against intercommunion between Catholics and Protestants.

"We may not give a false sign," the pope said at a meeting with the Swiss Protestant Evangelical Association June 14 in Kehrsatz, a village outside Bern, Switzerland's capital.

Shared communion is the goal of unity, and not the means toward it, he said, addressing the group of Protestant leaders. The pope acknowledged the pain of separation felt by Christians of different denominations who want to pray together at the Eucharist, but said that to agree to intercommunion just to avoid pain would be delusory.

"It would be of no use to do away with pain of separation if we do not remedy the cause of this pain, which is precisely the separation itself," the pope said.

Catholic and Protestant churches differ on substantial doctrinal issues, such as the role of the church as the mediator between God and man and the role of the ministry. Intercommunion is one of the most controversial practical issues between Catholics and Protestants.

"We believe that the celebration of communion at separate tables means disobedience towards Christ's call and a limitation of his generosity," said J. P. Jornod, president of the Swiss Protestant Evangelical Association.

"By the way," he added, "many members of our churches feel this separation to be unbearable and simply overlook it for they consider it counter-testimony."

The pope echoed his words for last December's 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther and acknowledged mistakes by all sides. He also cited a need for objective study of the historical disagreement.

The pope noted that Switzerland this year celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth of Huldrych Zwingli, who with John Calvin was a key Swiss figure in the Protestant Reformation.

"We cannot forget that the work of their reform remains a permanent point of contention between us and makes our church divisions something still present," the pope said.

"On the other hand, no one can deny that the elements of the theology and spirituality of each one of them maintains the deep ties between us," he added.

"Perhaps the day will come, and I hope it will be soon," the pope added, "when Swiss Catholics and Protestants will be able to write the history of that troubled and complex period together and with an objectivity rooted in deep fraternal charity."

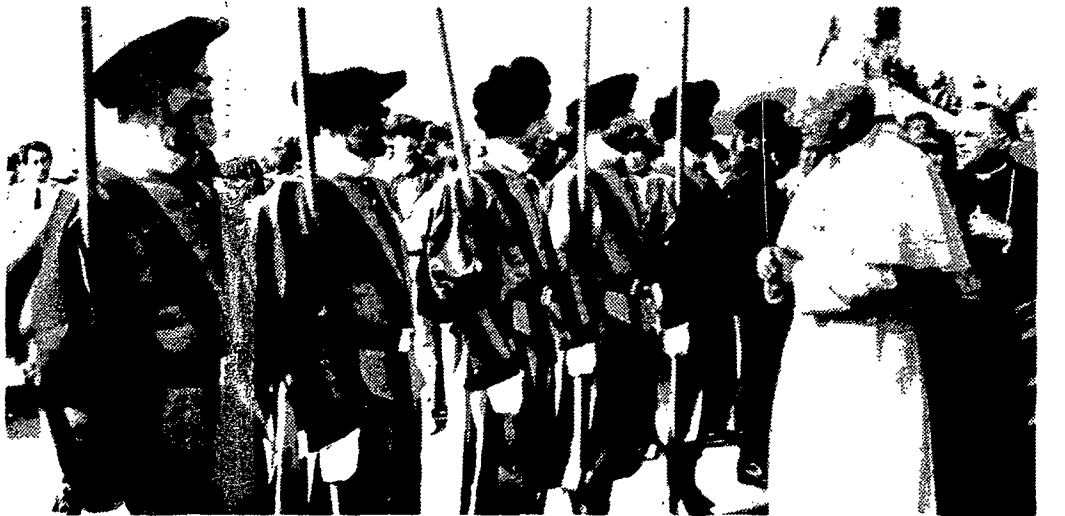
Church officials had expected some protest demonstrations. Instead, Protestant leaders enthusiastically welcomed the pope at Kehrsatz's ecumenical center, built in 1975 for Catholics and Protestants.

At the papal meeting, Marguerite Stucky-Shaller, a representative of the Evangelical Church, asked the pope to work for women's rights.

"In the churches of the world, whether they accept women in their ministry or not,



Pope Paul II is greeted at the World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva by Willem Visser't Hooft, the first WCC general secretary, left, and Rev. Philip Potter, current secretary. Below, the pontiff reviews a contingent of Swiss Guards on his arrival at Lugano airport.



women feel unwelcome, second-rate," she said.

Churches give "lip service to the value of women's position," but church doctrine and practice make it evident that women "are regarded as incomplete human beings," she said.

She asked the pope to "give a clear sign that the church will overcome the antagonism between men and women."

The pope said that questions on women's rights and dignity should be part of discussion among churches.

"We may hope that they lead to a common clarification and formation of opinion," he said.

A Baptist minister reported that a layman asked the pope why the church could not take the small step of allowing intercommunion for the sake of ecumenism.

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, head of

the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, responded for the pope and said that for Catholics intercommunion was the biggest step, added the Baptist minister.

Sunday, June 17, the pope visited Sion, a town less than 12 miles away from Ecône, home of the suspended Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, and stressed obedience to papal authority and the need for church renewal. The archbishop is leader of a movement opposed to ecumenical and liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The stress on obedience came during a Mass at Sion's airport where he ordained nine men to the priesthood and recalled the priest's promise of obedience to his bishop and to the pope.

"By being obedient to these two, the priest lives in community with the whole church," the pope said.

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