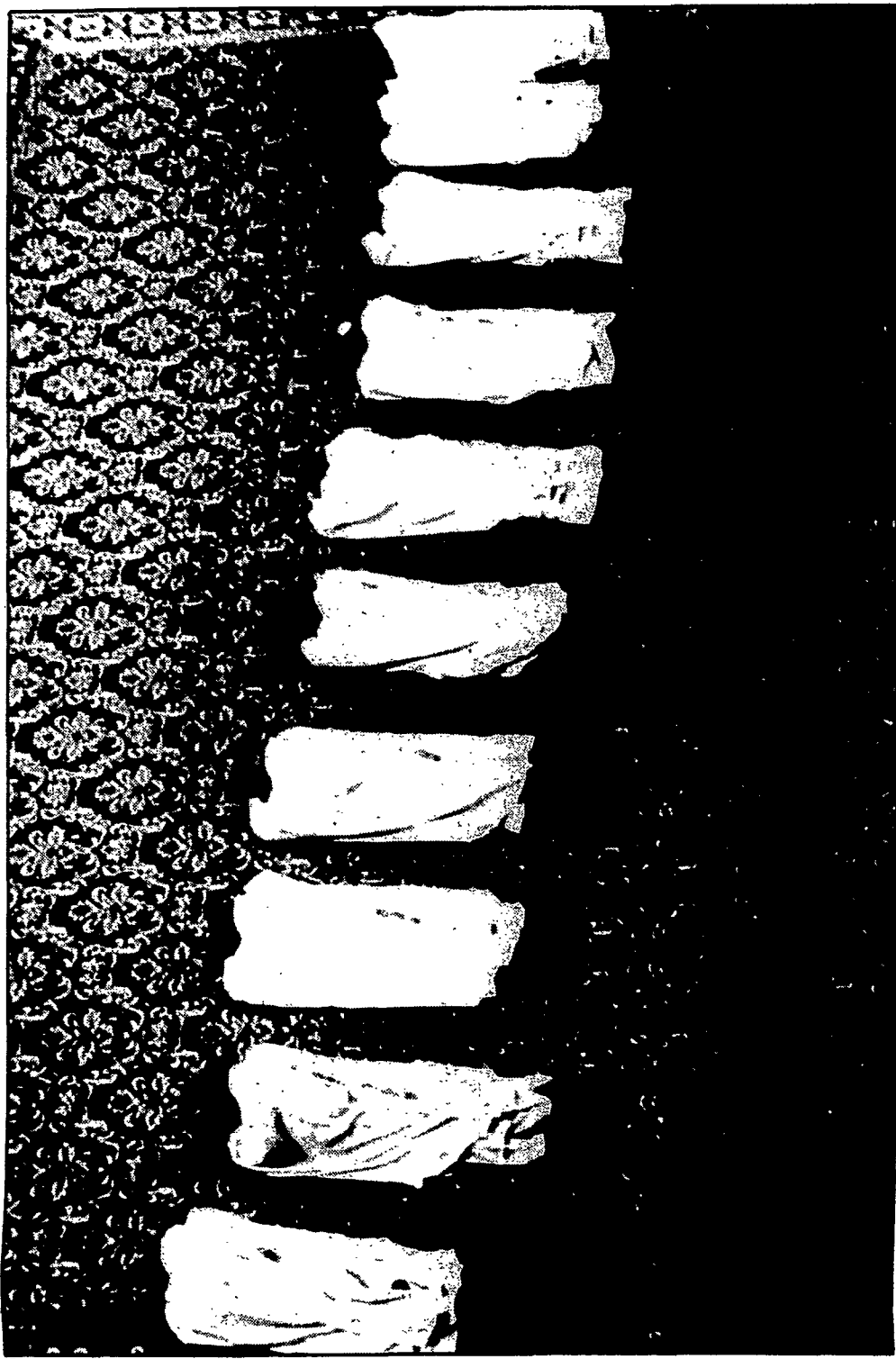


World & Nation



At St. Peter's Basilica, 10 new bishops prostrate themselves during their ordination ceremony. Pope John Paul II ordained the group, which included Nazareth-born Michel Sabbah, the first Arab to be named Latin-rite patriarch of Jerusalem, and American John Gavin Nolan, who will be auxiliary bishop with the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services.

NC News/UPI

The pope's bishops: Shaping world hierarchy in his image

By John Thavis

Vatican City (NC) — In the nearly 10 years he has held office, Pope John Paul II has begun to shape the body of the world's bishops in his image.

He chooses men who are trained in doctrinal theology, dedicated to the sacraments and unafraid to buck contemporary trends in the Church and in society at large.

So say Vatican officials who have followed this papacy and the pope's approximately 1,200 episcopal appointments — more than a third of all active bishops.

The officials said the pope looks for candidates who can articulately defend Church doctrine. Many are older, and many are members of religious orders. In addition, many have been surprise choices, sometimes arousing opposition from local priests and other Catholics.

Choosing bishops is traditionally one of the most crucial papal tasks. It involves some local consultation but is ultimately up to the pope, who can put his stamp on the Church's hierarchy for years to come.

"This pope takes a deep and personal interest in the appointment of bishops, especially to the larger sees. It is a major theme on his agenda," said one official who has been at the Vatican since 1977.

The official said the pope's choices reflect his overriding concern about orthodoxy in an age marked by dissent. In the defense of Church teachings, bishops are seen as the front line.

Two appointments — one of the pope's first and one of his latest — help illustrate the startling decisions the pontiff has sometimes made.

In 1978, when he sought a replacement for his former Archdiocese of Krakow, Poland, the pope was expected to turn to a veteran of the Polish hierarchy. Instead, he picked his former seminary rector, Monsignor Franciszek Macharski, a theologian known for his piety. A few months later, before the shock waves had subsided, he made Archbishop Macharski a cardinal.

In 1986, after a 10-month search, the pope made a surprising choice for the successor to Cardinal Franz Konig of Vienna, Austria. It was a 66-year-old Benedictine monk, Father Hans Hermann Groer, who had little administrative experience but a reputation for devoutness — and for recruiting priests during hiking trips with youths. Father Groer went from head of a minor seminary to head of an archdiocese with 1.5 million Catholics.

Lay and priest groups complained that the pope bypassed several auxiliary bishops and the entire diocesan clergy in his selection.

When some Austrian bishops brought the subject up last summer, the pope told them directly that there should be "no doubt" about the pope's right to select bishops.

"The doctrinal element is extremely important for this pope. He recognizes that in today's world, bishops who aren't doctrinally prepared are swept aside," said Monsignor Mario Rizzi, a Curia official under the last five popes and currently secretary of the Congregation for Eastern-rite Churches, which handles bishop appointments among Eastern rites.

Said Vatican press spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls: "The pope knows that the greatest enemy of the Church today is ... doctrinal and theological ignorance. The idea that many Catholics have of Church doctrine is a caricature."

In looking for episcopal candidates, Navarro-Valls said, the pope seeks "one element above all — a solid, intellectual knowledge of theology."

For that reason, Vatican departments involved routinely probe candidates for their educational history and their adherence to the magisterium, specifically on such teachings as "Humanae Vitae," the encyclical prohibiting artificial contraception, informed Vatican officials said. Attitudes toward priestly celibacy and women's ordination are also investigated. Loyalty to the Holy See is another important point on the checklist, they said.

"Orthodoxy is the big issue today. Someone who is known to be a challenger can certainly not be chosen to be a bishop," said one official involved in the selection process.

Vatican sources listed other important qualities sought in candidates:

- Priority on prayer and the sacraments and a clear understanding of the Church as a sacramental mystery. "Administrators, yes, but first they have to understand the Church as a sacrament," said Navarro-Valls.

- An ability to take positions not always shared by one's own faithful, diocesan priests or bishops' conference, and a willingness to modify diocesan structures that are not working well.

- A missionary vision of the Church that does not become bogged down in purely local interests.

- A strong commitment to vocations and an openness to apostolic lay movements.

Examining trends among the pope's major appointments

By John Thavis

Vatican City (NC) — Although the pope does not know all his candidates for bishop personally, Vatican officials and other sources familiar with the selection process said his world travels have opened the way for him to become acquainted with an increasing number of potential appointees.

His frequent foreign trips make him the first pontiff to meet the clergy and study their problems firsthand.

"When dioceses open up, he often has his own personal impression about what is needed," said one Vatican official. "With major sees, the pope himself ponders (the appointments) in a special way."

Several bishops were singled out by sources as typical of the trend in appointments set by Pope John Paul in major sees:

- Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris, whom the pope elevated from a parish priest to the head of one of Europe's most important archdioceses in 16 months. Cardinal Lustiger began as bishop of Orleans, France, in 1979, energetically reorganizing diocesan offices and, as one of his first acts, reopening the local seminary. In Paris, he set up a two-year spiritual and doctrinal education program for the laity. Like many of Pope John Paul's appointees, and like the pope himself, he is described as progressive on some social issues and conservative on doctrine. By papal assignment, he wrote most of the first draft of a message to the world's Catholics during the 1985 extraordinary synod.

- Another Frenchman, Coadjutor Archbishop Pierre Eyt of Bordeaux, France, cited by some sources as a model younger candidate for this pope. As an important member of the International Theological Commission, he wrote its treatise on Church unity in 1985, and quickly won the respect of the pope, who named him to the Bordeaux post the following year. Last fall, the pope picked him to write one of the major working

documents during the Synod of Bishops on the laity.

- Cardinal Giacomo Biffi of Bologna, Italy, known chiefly for his theological writings and lectures before the pope put him in charge of one of Italy's most difficult archdioceses in 1984. Once in Bologna, he quickly built a reputation for political outspokenness, denouncing the leftist regional government on such issues as abortion and divorce during an election campaign. Last summer he reversed a longstanding policy when he prohibited concert music in archdiocesan churches.

- Cardinal Angel Suquia Goicoechea, promoted at age 66 to Madrid, Spain, in 1983, named a cardinal in 1985 and elected

president of the Spanish bishops' conference in 1987. Under his leadership, the conference has stepped up its criticism of the Socialist government policies on abortion, sex education in public schools and the Church's role in public life. His replacement of Madrid's seminary rector was protested by an organization of more than 200 local priests.

- Cardinal Friedrich Wetter, promoted to Munich, West Germany, in 1982 and made a cardinal three years later. A professor of dogmatic theology, he is the author of a number of books on Christian doctrine. He has been a papal appointee to the last two synods, where he has played an influential role.

- Archbishop Lucas Moreira Neves, a

Dominican and former secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops, named in July to head Brazil's primate See, Sao Salvador da Bahia. In unexpectedly promoting this curial official to such an important archdiocese, the pope was "sending a message" of dissatisfaction to the Brazilian hierarchy, said one Vatican official.

The pope has also not hesitated to select older men, such as Cardinal Suquia. According to statistics provided by the Vatican, the average age of the world's active and retired bishops has increased rapidly under this pontificate, from about 59 in 1978 to nearly 64 in 1986.

Consultation: Casting a critical eye on candidates

By John Thavis

Vatican City (NC) — Although the selection of bishops ultimately rests with Pope John Paul II, he relies on several important conduits in gathering information and recommending candidates.

Local Catholics, both lay and clerical, are given an opportunity to comment in private on candidates. Local bishops and bishops' conferences are consulted in drawing up the final three-name list, called a "terna," for Vatican review.

Several Vatican officials said, however, that under this pope the "terna" is sometimes sent back. And because his final choices have often been surprising, local priests and laity have sometimes protested about the extent of consultation.

Vatican officials said the first stage in consultation is in correspondence between the nuncio, who coordinates the search, and local clergy and laity. The nuncio then writes to area bishops for their views.

As specific names emerge, detailed questionnaires are sent out to people "in a position to know" the candidates, one

Vatican official said. The letters and the replies are considered strictly confidential. An unfavorable report can badly damage a candidate's chances.

The questions focus on everything from the religious habits of a candidate's family to his degree of support for papal teachings, according to two informed Vatican officials.

Besides ordinary biographical and education information, the following questions are routinely asked, officials said:

- Does he demonstrate loyalty to the Holy See? Is he critical of the hierarchy? Does he adhere to the magisterium, and support its teachings on birth control, the male priesthood and priestly celibacy?

- Does he have good moral conduct? Does he show psychological balance and prudence in judgment?

- What is his attitude toward the Eucharist? Is he a good preacher? Does he shy away at all from hearing individual confessions? Is he interested in youths? Does he have an open attitude toward apostolic movements? Does he have a missionary consciousness and a world vision of the

Church?

- Is he interested in the problem of vocations? One official said this interest must be "a commitment that is more than talk — he should know about seminary and formation programs."

- Is he attentive to social problems, in accordance with Church teachings? Does he have a healthy attitude toward other religions? What are his political attitudes?

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which helps choose bishops in mission territories, also asks about each candidate's attitude toward Marxism.

In administrative areas, the questions focus on a candidate's initiative and his judgment in seeking capable and suitable advisers. He should be able to listen to others without forgetting that "the bishop is always the boss," the official said.

The list of recommended candidates can be sent back by the pope or by the three Vatican agencies which handle appointments — the congregations for bishops, evangelization and Eastern-rite churches.