

New cardinals reflect Church's future

By John Thavis

Vatican City (NC) — In his choice of 25 new cardinals, Pope John Paul II was preparing for the Church's future in two important ways: responding to new developments in communist states and recognizing the young churches of the developing world, which will soon have the majority of the globe's Catholics.

On one hand, with key appointments in Lithuania, where the Church wants to test the possibilities of the current Soviet "glasnost" (openness) campaign, and in Hong Kong, which will reunite with communist China in 1997, the pope was positioning local leaders for sensitive times ahead.

In a more universal way, Pope John Paul continued the slow expansion of the College of Cardinals, once considered an exclusive club of European archbishops and curial officials, to include representatives of younger churches from around the world. Also elevated to the college were U.S. Archbishops James A. Hickey of Washington, D.C., and Edmund C. Szoka of Detroit.

Both elements are characteristic of this pope, who in the nearly 10 years since his election

has named 85 cardinals, many of them from non-traditional sees. The new nominees will be inducted June 28, raising the College of Cardinals to a record high of 162 members.

Vatican press spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, referring in particular to the new cardinals from Lithuania and Hong Kong, said the nominations were "precise choices" for the years to come.

"These are not just symbolic appointments. They represent real options" and "preparations for the Church's future," he said. They also showed the pope was rewarding pastoral service rather than curial experience at the Vatican, Navarro-Valls said. Only five of the new cardinals were Curia officials.

In Lithuania, which has not had a cardinal for several centuries, the pope elevated Bishop Vincentas Sladkevicius, an apostolic administrator in Kaisiadorys who was recently named president to the Lithuanian bishops' conference. The 67-year-old bishop, who was prevented by his government from carrying out his pastoral duties from 1957-82, is known among as a strong spokesman for religious rights.

Hong Kong's first cardinal will be Chinese-born Bishop John Baptist Wu Cheng-Chung, 63, who has held talks with Chinese officials on the Church's post-reunification status. He has been allowed to visit relatives in China in recent years.

In Hungary, the elevation of the primate, Archbishop Laszlo Paskai of Esztergom, 61, is another step in the restoration of that country's hierarchy. His predecessor, Cardinal Laszlo Lekai, who died in 1986, won small concessions through church-state dialogue, and Archbishop Paskai has indicated that he will follow the same path.

When he announced the new cardinals, the pope said the "entire Church is joyful, because it again sees in their choice the underlining of a fitting universality."

In fact, several of those elevated were surprise selections and the first cardinal-representatives from their local churches. They included Mozambican Archbishop Alexandre Jose Maria dos Santos of Maputo; Archbishop Christian Wiyghan Tumi of Garoua, Cameroon; and Bishop Jean Margeot of Port-Louis, in tiny Mauritius.

Pope to meet Waldheim several times during visit

By Agostino Bono

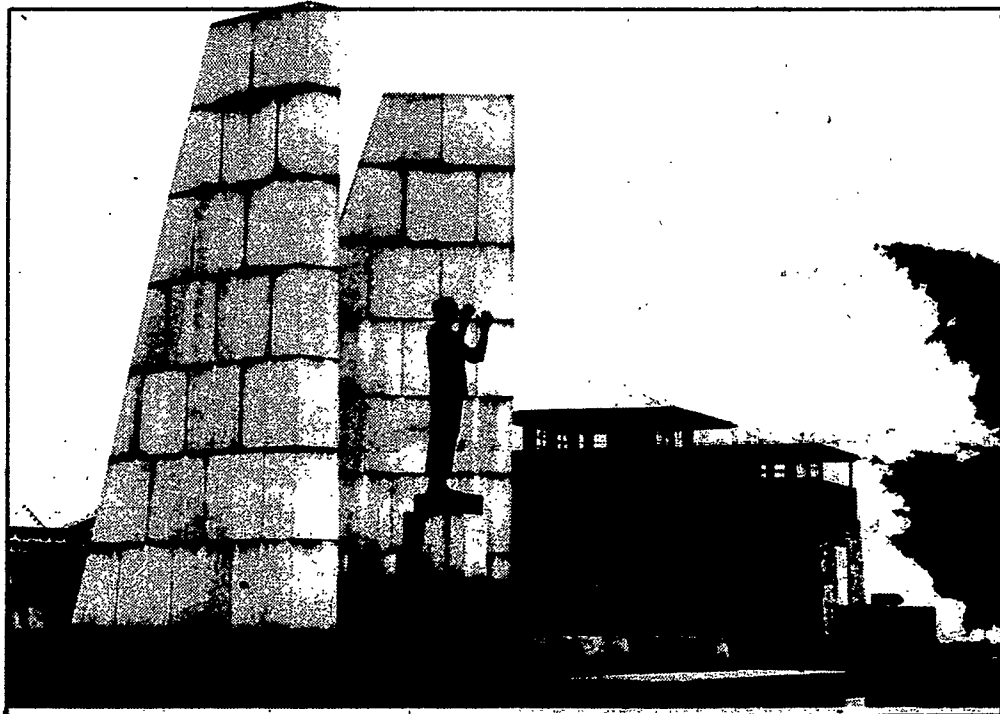
Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II will meet several times with Austrian President Kurt Waldheim and visit a former Nazi concentration camp during his June 23-27 visit to Austria.

The Vatican released the detailed itinerary of the visit, expected to be dominated by the pope's controversial visits with Waldheim. The itinerary does not mention Waldheim by name, but lists a June 23 evening meeting with the Austrian president, government officials and the diplomatic corps. Waldheim is also expected to meet the pope at airport arrival and departure ceremonies.

Waldheim has been accused by international Jewish groups of committing war crimes as a World War II officer in the German army. He has denied the charges. An international commission sponsored by the Austrian government said he was not guilty of war crimes himself, but that he knew of atrocities and did nothing to stop them.

Paul Grosz, leader of Austria's tiny Jewish community, has said he will protest the meetings and the pope's 1987 Vatican meeting with Waldheim during a morning meeting with the pope June 24 in the capital of Vienna. Such visits with heads of state are aimed at making "Waldheim presentable to the world," Grosz said.

Since the pope is scheduled to meet Waldheim on the first two days of the visit, Austrian and Vatican church officials fear that the



One of the stops on the itinerary for Pope John Paul II's visit to Austria is the former Nazi concentration camp of Mauthausen, where thousands of prisoners were subjected to the brutal Nazi program of "extermination through work."

controversies generated will overshadow other important papal events and messages. These include a June 24 outdoor Mass near the Hungarian border, at which the pope is expected to issue a message to Soviet-bloc Catholics; a

June 24 visit to the Nazi concentration camp at Mauthausen, at which 122,767 prisoners — mostly Jews — were killed; and a June 26 ecumenical prayer meeting at a Lutheran church in Salzburg.

Promote individual confession, pope urges U.S. prelates

By Agostino Bono

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II told U.S. bishops May 31 to promote greater individual confession and to avoid abuses of general absolution.

The sacrament of penance is in crisis in many parts of the world because of "unwarranted interpretations" of the requirements for general absolution, the pope told the group of 20 U.S. bishops. The bishops were in Rome for their *ad limina* visits, required of diocesan heads every five years to report on the status of their dioceses.

The renewal process envisioned by the Second Vatican Council requires "the practice of integral and individual confession of sins," the pope told the bishops.

He said national bishops' understandings must continuously promote better understanding of the requirements for general absolution, as spelled out in canon law, the Church's legal code.

"Sporadic efforts are not enough to overcome the crisis," the pope said.

General absolution occurs when a priest grants absolution from sins to a number of

people at the same time, without hearing individual confessions. Canon 961 of the revised Code of Canon Law states that under normal circumstances, absolution can only be given when a person confesses individually to a priest. But the canon allows two exceptions:

- when "the danger of death is imminent," such as during a war; and
- when "a serious necessity exists" — for example, an insufficient number of priests to hear confessions — that would deprive the people from receiving Communion and sacramental grace for a long period of time.

The canon says it is up to the diocesan bishop "in the light of criteria agreed upon with other members of the conference of bishops" to judge which conditions justify "a serious necessity" for general absolution.

Another canon, No. 962, says that for a penitent with serious sins, general absolution is valid only if the penitent has the intention of later confessing individually the serious sins that cannot be confessed at that time.

The U.S. bishops have been discussing norms for general absolution since the publication of the revised Code of Canon Law in 1983. At their June 24-27 meeting in Collegeville, Minn., the bishops will consider a proposed national norm regarding the acceptable length of time penitents could go without access to the sacraments before general absolution would be allowed. The proposed norm would interpret the canon's reference to "a long time" to mean periods of a month or longer.

NY bishops support surrogacy recommendations

Washington (NC) — The New York State Catholic Conference, which comprises the bishops of the state's eight dioceses, has expressed support for recommendations that the state ban commercial surrogate-mother contracts.

The recommendations, issued by Gov. Mario Cuomo's Task Force on Life and Law, said the state should declare such surrogacy contracts unenforceable as contrary to public policy. The task force urged that criminal penalties be imposed against surrogates and those who arrange surrogacy contracts, but did not recommend outlawing all surrogacy.

Father Kenneth Doyle, spokesman for the state Catholic conference, said in a telephone interview June 3 that the proposals were very

similar to what the conference supported a year ago in testimony given at hearings on the issue.

Last February, two state senators introduced a bill that would have approved surrogacy while at the same time regulating it. The bill never got out of committee.

Cuomo will meet with legislators to work on specific legislation that incorporates the task force recommendation.

Father Doyle said evidence shows that 85-90 percent of those involved in surrogacy arrangements do so for financial gain. If the task force recommendations are enacted as law, the remainder would be deterred by the fact that such contracts are unenforceable and the "chanciness would argue against getting involved," he added.

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