

## Pope highlights values on trip to East Europe

By Agostino Bonaccorso  
Catholic News Service

SKOCZOW, Poland — Pope John Paul II cut into a swath of Eastern Europe and found that the church has a long way to go before Christian values become imbedded in society.

The pope's 64th trip outside of Italy took him to the Czech Republic and his native Poland May 20-22. He announced a 1997 visit to the same region and canonized two new saints.

The trip quickly put the pope in touch with societies still in search of a new identity after the end of communist rule five years ago.

"In the realm of mentality, changes are rather slow to come or difficult to achieve," said Czech President Vaclav Havel, greeting the pope May 20.

Enthusiasm "has given way to more sober thinking about everyday life with its everyday cares," said Havel, referring to the pope's 1990 visit, when the air was still fresh with the peaceful victory over communism.

"Before, we struggled with something outside us. Now, we have to turn to our hearts if we want to live up to the values that we put on our banners several years ago," he said.

Havel, a nonpracticing Catholic, asked the church's support in a "spiritual rebirth," noting that it is the largest Czech church.

The pope also got a church progress report from Cardinal Miloslav Vlk of

Prague at a May 20 prayer meeting.

"The priests are few and often old and sick," said Cardinal Vlk. "Communism isolated us in ourselves" and now "we want to open ourselves to the world and society."

The pope offered his own assessment, saving his main admonitions for his arrival in his native Poland.

"As the future shape of our republic is being decided" Poles must rediscover their 1,000-year Christian history, the pope said at a May 22 Mass in Skoczow.

The country needs people of firm moral conscience, especially politicians, to create a "just moral order," he added.

In several speeches in Poland, the pope lashed out at a spreading anti-clerical secularism which has generated increased prejudice against believers.

"They notice the increasing tendency to marginalize them from the life of society; what is most sacred to them is sometimes mocked and ridiculed," he said at the Mass.

Upon arriving in the Czech Republic May 20, the pope announced he planned to return again in 1997 to celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the death of St. Adalbert, a 10th-century bishop of Prague and a martyr.

The pope said he would visit Prague and several other cities which are associated with the saint, who lived also in what is now Poland and Germany.

Meeting with about 10,000 youths who gathered on the hill at the Svaty Kopecek Marian shrine, outside Olo-



Reuters/RNS  
Czech President Vaclav Havel listens to Pope John Paul II during their private meeting May 20 at Prague Castle. The pope arrived in Prague as part of a three-day visit to the Czech Republic and Poland.

mouc, the pope sang and joked with them. He also watched a group of youths who could not hear or speak perform a pantomime aimed at showing what should be the Christian attitude in the face of worldly temptations.

Despite Protestant protests, he also declared the sainthood of Blessed Jan Sarkander, a priest killed in 1620 by Lutheran rulers during a religious war.

Many Protestant leaders said they regard St. Sarkander as a symbol of efforts to forcibly convert them to Catholicism. He was tortured to death after being accused of helping an invading Polish Catholic army — accusations he denied.

At the May 21 canonization Mass and in a subsequent meeting with youths,

the pope held up the new saint as a spur to ecumenism. He said the time has come to erase the hatred of the past.

"Today I, the pope of the church of Rome, in the name of all Catholics, ask forgiveness for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics during the turbulent history of these peoples; at the same time I pledge the Catholic Church's forgiveness for whatever harm her sons and daughters suffered," the pope said.

At the May 21 Mass, the pope also declared the sainthood of Zdislava of Lemberk, a 13th-century mother of four and benefactor of the poor. The pope described her as "an example of marital fidelity, a support of domestic spirituality and moral integrity."

## Bishops to discuss major changes in national conference

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Catholic bishops will take the first big step toward major changes in their national organization when they meet in Chicago June 15-17.

A key goal of the proposals they will discuss is to get more bishops involved directly and actively in the conference.

A second goal is to increase the importance of the bishops' 13 regional groupings.

A third is to reduce the number of statements issued by the conference.

If the bishops adopt the proposed changes, it will be the biggest overhaul of their national conference structures since 1966, when they formed two conferences — the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and U.S. Catholic Conference — to replace the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

In fact one proposed change is to combine the NCCB and USCC into one conference, which would probably be called the NCCB.

Behind the proposals is a four-year study by a committee headed by Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, former president of the NCCB-USCC and its first general secretary.

The committee is also proposing that the bishops:

- Reduce the number of standing committees from the current 28 to 15.
- Increase committee sizes.
- Increase regional representation of bishops on the NCCB Administrative Committee.
- Limit the Administrative Committee membership of each standing committee to its chairman.
- Limit full, voting membership on all standing committees to bishops.
- Place nonbishops on committees only as consultants, with a voice but no vote.
- Adopt new rules for conference statements, giving the conference president more flexibility to respond quickly to developing situations.

The bishops are to spend a substantial portion of their three-day meeting in Chicago discussing the report of the Bernardin committee, called the Ad Hoc Committee on Mission and Structure.

No vote is scheduled in June, however. In light of the Chicago discussions,

the committee is to review its proposals in the months that follow and develop final recommendations to submit for debate and a vote at the bishops' next general meeting, in mid-November in Washington.

Copies of the committee's report were mailed to all the bishops in late April.

The report said some current committees would become "true subcommittees working at the pleasure of the standing committee" to which they are assigned.

The Bernardin committee also proposed a rule that no bishop can serve on more than two standing committees at the same time and that a committee chairman cannot be a member of any other committee during his tenure as chairman.

The report said that while the committee proposed limiting committee membership to bishops, "the valuable contributions that lay men and women, priests and religious can make to the work of the conference is encouraged and sought through consultant roles for standing committees as well as the National Advisory Council."

The advisory council, which has five bishops and about 50 priests, religious and lay people from across the country, meets before each national meeting of the bishops; reviews materials the bishops plan to act on and gives its own critique of those materials.

On the committee with Cardinal Bernardin are:

- Cardinal Law and Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles.
- Archbishops William J. Levada of Portland, Ore.; Oscar H. Lipscomb of Mobile, Ala.; and Rember G. Weakland of Milwaukee.
- Bishops Joseph A. Fiorenza of Galveston-Houston; James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio; and Donald W. Wuerl of Pittsburgh.

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### Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

	A	B	C	D
1	Eden	Samaritan	Paul	Psalms
2	Genesis	Stephen	Peter	Bethlehem
3	Joshua	David	John	Jesus
4	Revelations	Jacob	Matthias	Salomon