



Pope John Paul II meets with Indonesia President Abdurrahman Wahid and his daughter Zannube Arifah Chafsoh Rahman at the Vatican Feb. 5.

Pope, Indonesia leader seek peace

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — After meeting Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid said he hoped that before he returned from a European tour the country's former army chief would resign from his Cabinet post.

Speaking to reporters Feb. 5 following a private audience with Pope John Paul and meetings with representatives of the Catholic peace group San Egidio, Wahid repeated his call for Gen. Wiranto's resignation.

"I hope he decides to resign before I come back. But if not, we will implement what we decided before: Who is prosecuted or investigated by a court should be inactive and be replaced temporarily," he said.

"If he is found guilty, we will implement whatever the judge decides," said Wahid, who was expected to return to Indonesia Feb. 13.

Currently coordinating minister for political and security affairs, Wiranto was military chief when violence erupted in East Timor last year following an August independence referendum.

An Indonesian inquiry named the general among people to be investigated concerning the violence, which left hundreds of people dead and a massive refugee crisis.

East Timor was among the topics Wahid discussed with the pope, the Vatican said.

In a Feb. 5 statement, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the pope and Wahid "exchanged opinions on the present situation in Indonesia, with specific regard to interreligious dialogue and the peaceful coexistence between the country's diverse communities."

Indonesia's Molucca Islands also have been the scene of fierce fighting in recent months.

Though the media has often depicted the violence there as interreligious strife, local church officials have said such a view is too simplistic.

Wahid agreed, saying "both Christianity and Islam are manipulated by people who are ambitious politically."

Elected last October on a reformist platform, Wahid has repeatedly called for peace and unity in the diverse archipelago nation.

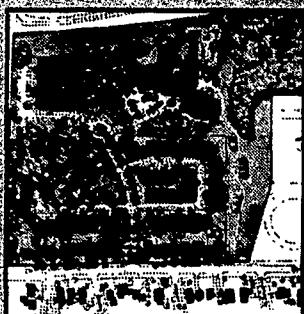


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Can priests hold up under job demands?

EDITORS' NOTE: This is the second installment in a series on the effects of a declining number of priests and related vocations issues.

In the perfect world, when a priest leaves a parish he is replaced by another priest. End of story. Life goes on.

Yet a recent chain of events shows that things can be much different in the Rochester Diocese:

- In early January, Father Michael Conboy left his pastorate in the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community. He became diocesan director of priest personnel, as well as pastor of St. Jerome's Church in East Rochester. Each of those positions previously had been designated as full-time jobs. Father Conboy turned 65 on Jan. 7.

"Luckily I'm in good health, thank God," Father Conboy said.

- The Corning-Painted Post cluster, which comprises four churches, had also lost its parochial vicar, Father Michael Brown. He became pastor at the Catholic Community of Mt. Morris and Nunda in November.



second in an occasional series

- Fathers Conboy and Brown are being replaced not by two priests, but one. Father Donald Curtiss began Jan. 24 as parochial vicar in Corning-Painted Post. One of the parish's pastoral associates, Sister Joan Cawley, SSJ, is serving as temporary pastoral administrator through June.

- Father Curtiss came to the cluster from a five-church grouping on Rochester's west side. He is the third priest to leave that particular assignment in less than two years.

"I think that's just the way it is these days," said Father Paul Tomasso, pastor of the westside churches. "We have to be realistic that priests are probably going to move more rapidly than in the past."

- There will not be a priest replacement for Father Curtiss at the westside churches. Father Tomasso has already eliminated a total of four weekday Masses among those churches, and will reduce Sunday Mass schedules beginning in July.

In the Feb. 3 *Catholic Courier* cover story, diocesan officials discussed new approaches to parish administration in light of the ongoing priest shortage. As far as Father James Hewes is concerned, the changes can't happen soon enough.

Father Hewes said he conducted a health survey of Rochester diocesan priests three years ago, and discovered that an alarmingly high number reported having high blood pressure. In addition, he noted, a recent rash of deaths and illnesses among his brethren has made him more concerned about the topic.

"I look around and don't like what I see. The list goes on and on," said Father Hewes, a parochial vicar in the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva (St. Francis de Sales and St. Stephen's churches).

Father Hewes noted that expectations of a priest go well beyond parish ministry. He cited numerous organizations that seek out priests for visitation and chaplaincies: nursing homes and other senior-citizen residences; colleges; Knights of Columbus; Cursillo; Legion of Mary; Rosary Society.

"They all want a priest presence," he said.

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