

## WORLD &amp; NATION

## Pope John Paul II plans busy post-jubilee year

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As Pope John Paul II guided the church through a packed calendar of events during Holy Year 2000, one question trailed him like a shadow: What comes next?

More than a year ago, according to a widely circulated story, the pope told top aides not to pencil him in for anything past Jan. 6, 2001 — the day he would swing shut the Holy Door and, with it, the jubilee.

The implication was that the 80-year-old pontiff, left increasingly frail by neurological disease, would cut back his official activities or even resign once he had successfully led the church into the third millennium.

Other longtime papal observers warned of a "post-jubilee letdown" that, psychologically or even physically, might affect the Polish-born pope after his crowning achievements of the jubilee.

But as the Holy Year winds down, it's becoming clear that this pope has no intention of closing up shop once he closes the Holy Door.

Instead, he's getting ready for yet another year of consistories, synods, canonizations, foreign travel, public liturgies, speechmaking and meetings.

"I don't see him slowing down. I think the pope will be returning to the kind of activity that existed before the jubilee. If anything, the intense agenda of the jubilee has postponed many issues that must now be dealt with," papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said in mid-December.

In January, the pope is expected to name about 25 new cardinals, once again changing the face of the body that one day will elect his successor. After they receive their red hats — probably in late February — Pope John Paul will have chosen 110 out of 120 potential papal electors.

The new batch of cardinals is expected to include Archbishop Edward M. Egan of New York and possibly Archbishops Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington and Justin F. Rigali of St. Louis. Among other cardinals likely to be named are those from Italy, England, Ireland, India, Nigeria, Brazil, Argentina, and several other Latin American countries.

Perhaps the most taxing item on the pope's 2001 calendar is the regular assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October, postponed from 2000. The pope presides personally over its long general sessions, then typically lunches with groups of participants. He is expected to take a particular interest in this year's theme, the role of the bishop.



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul II waves to the crowd as he makes his way through St. Peter's Square during his last jubilee audience of 2000.

The pope will continue his globetrotting papacy after the Holy Year, although the trips planned will keep him fairly close to home. In May, he'll resume his series of pilgrimages to biblical lands when he makes his first visit to Syria.

In June, he ventures into Ukraine, where a Catholic minority is eagerly awaiting him but where Orthodox Christians are still wary of a papal visit. A stop in Athens, Greece — where St. Paul preached — could be tacked onto that trip, depending on reaction from the Orthodox Church of Greece.

In September, the pope is expected to make his way to Armenia in western Asia, another predominantly Orthodox country that is celebrating the 1,700th anniversary of its Christianity. For now, it looks like a hoped-for post-synodal trip to Oceania has been ruled out because the long flight could prove too fatiguing for the pontiff.

According to Navarro-Valls, the pope's

travel plans reflect a top priority for the coming year: improving ecumenical relations, especially with the Orthodox. By personally venturing into the Orthodox heartland, the pope hopes to build bridges and soothe the conflicts, confident that he is a pontiff who truly understands the East.

At the same time, the Vatican spokesman said, the pope does not feel like he's working against a deadline when it comes to improving relations with the Orthodox.

"He's looking ahead, but he's also looking back, aware that for nearly 10 centuries there were no contacts (between the churches). That doesn't mean another 10 centuries has to pass, but certainly there are problems that cannot be resolved in a year or two," Navarro-Valls said.

Foreign trips are the most widely covered part of a papacy, but most of Pope John Paul's time is spent in a series of invisible meetings behind the Vatican's walls. Among the most important are "ad limina"

visits made by individual bishops to consult personally with the pope and his aides. Suspended during the Holy Year, they are set to pick up again in 2001, with groups of bishops from Latin American countries.

The pope is also expected to resume his frequent habit of visiting Rome parishes on weekends. To date, he has visited 290 parishes in his diocese, and has about 38 left. Sources in the Rome vicariate said the first visits are being tentatively lined up.

Add to that the constant stream of audiences with ambassadors, papal nuncios, Vatican managers and groups ranging from soccer teams to religious orders, and it's clear that the pope will not have much of a respite after the Holy Year's heavy load.

In fact, he won't even get a day off: The morning after closing down the Holy Year, the pope will be back saying Mass in the Sistine Chapel and baptizing about 20 babies born during the jubilee year.

## Msgr. Baker's canonization process enters new phase

By Nancy Hartnagel  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The Catholic Church has begun investigating the blood of Msgr. Nelson H. Baker — still inexplicably fresh 64 years after it was sealed in a glass jar at his death — for a possible first miracle that would advance his sainthood cause.

Msgr. Baker, a Buffalo diocesan priest who was beloved for his many charitable works, currently is a "servant of God" in the sainthood process. He also served St. Mary's Parish in Corning in 1881-82.

In general, the church must accept two miracles as having occurred through the intercession of the prospective saint, one for beatification and one for canonization.

A ceremony involving an unnamed representative of Andrea Ambrosi, the Rome attorney who is postulator or chief advocate for Msgr. Baker's cause, formally opened the miracle investigation in November in the Buffalo Diocese.

"That ceremony was done in secrecy"

according to protocols of the Vatican's Congregation for Sainthood Causes, said Beth Donovan, public relations director for the Basilica of Our Lady of Victory in Lackawanna, where Msgr. Baker was pastor for more than 50 years.

Donovan also speaks for the parish's social service and fund-raising entities, Baker Victory Services and Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity, which she said are part of Msgr. Baker's legacy.

Under the corporate umbrella today, she noted, 800 employees "care for almost 2,000 young people on a daily basis," in addition to providing maternity and adoption services.

A Civil-War era soldier and grain dealer, Msgr. Baker was ordained a priest in 1876. He died in 1936 at the age of 95.

Because of ministries he began at Our Lady of Victory, he was widely known as "padre of the poor" and "apostle of charity." He operated soup kitchens and a hospital, as well as homes for unwed mothers, homeless and troubled boys, and abandoned infants.

Donovan, who spoke with Catholic

News Service by phone Dec. 6, said the investigation began before a Buffalo diocesan tribunal.

Though witnesses "are not actually being identified by name, they are people that were eyewitnesses to the moving of (Msgr. Baker's) body in March of 1999," she said. "This is focusing just on the exhumation of his remains and the reinterment (in the basilica)," she added.

Moving the body to the basilica was recommended by the Vatican, she explained, "to increase veneration to this man and increase awareness about his great life and make him more accessible for people to pray to him."

Donovan said medical experts in Buffalo and Rome already have examined the still-liquid blood, which was found among three glass jars in a small concrete box atop Msgr. Baker's bronze coffin in Holy Cross Cemetery.

The existence of body fluids was a surprise, she said.

"What we believe is that the people who prepared his body for burial just had this foresight that because of the life he

led ... he was such a holy man, that they thought he might someday go through the (sainthood) process," said Donovan.

Officials took small samples of the fluids for testing purposes, she said, and the jars were "reburied in an undisclosed location."

She said that the focus has been the blood, and she has not been told what the individual jars contained. "It could be that it was blood in all three," she added.

Donovan said the Buffalo investigation was expected to last several weeks and had not yet concluded on Dec. 6.

The Buffalo documentation will be sent to Rome for additional scrutiny, but she said no one in Buffalo, including Msgr. Robert C. Wurtz, pastor at Our Lady of Victory and vice-postulator for the cause, knows the Rome timetable.

"It's one of those things that we hope happens sooner rather than later," she said. "With any cause for canonization, there's no set timeline of how quickly or slowly these things move."

"So, it's a test of patience for everyone," she added.