

Pope creates largest group of cardinals ever

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Presiding over three days of pageantry and prayer at the Vatican, Pope John Paul II created 44 new cardinals — the largest group ever — and asked them to help guide the church with humility and holiness.

At a sunlit ceremony — called a consistory — in St. Peter's Square Feb. 21, he handed red hats to the cardinals and, after embracing them one by one, urged them to be "fearless witnesses" of the Gospel in every corner of the earth.

The new cardinals included the heads of major archdioceses, Vatican officials, eminent theologians and one longtime personal friend of the pontiff, as well as several church leaders who were persecuted or hindered by authorities during their pastoral careers. They came from 27 countries and five continents — a geographical mix that the pope said highlighted the church's global presence in the 21st century.

Three Americans were among those who knelt before the pope: Cardinals Edward M. Egan of New York,



Arturo Mari/CNS

U.S. Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick embraces Pope John Paul II Feb. 21 in St. Peter's Square.

Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington and Avery Dulles, a Jesuit theologian.

Among the new group was Vietnamese Cardinal Francois Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, now a Vatican official, who was jailed for many years by communist authorities in his native country.

The ceremonies brought the total membership in the College of Cardinals briefly to 184, before the death late Feb. 21 of Venezuelan Cardinal Jose Ali Lebrun Moratinos. Of the current 183 cardinals, 135 are below age 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a papal conclave.

The newcomers included two prelates whom the pope named cardinals secretly, or "in pectore," in 1998, revealing their names only in January. One was an old personal friend of the Polish-born pontiff, Cardinal Marian Jaworski, the Latin-rite archbishop of Lviv, Ukraine. The other was Cardinal Janis Pujats of Riga, Latvia.

Filling up reception halls and churches throughout the week, the cardinals' supporters brought an international flavor, too. One teenager from Santiago, Chile, 16-year-old

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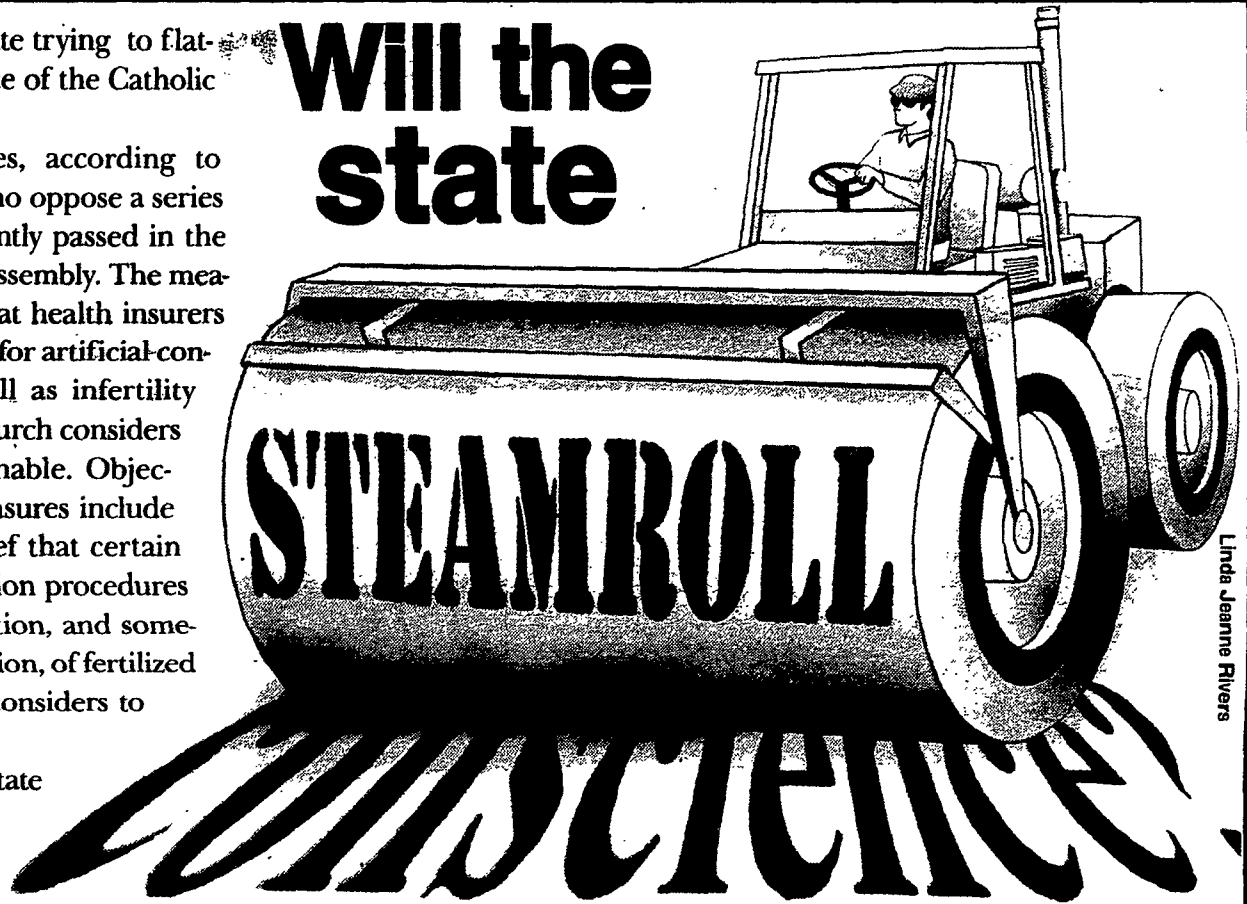
Is New York state trying to flatten the conscience of the Catholic Church?

In a sense, yes, according to church leaders who oppose a series of measures recently passed in the New York State Assembly. The measures mandate that health insurers provide coverage for artificial contraception as well as infertility treatments the church considers morally objectionable. Objections to such measures include the church's belief that certain artificial fertilization procedures result in the creation, and sometimes the destruction, of fertilized eggs the church considers to be human beings.

The New York State Senate has passed similar measures with a crucial difference — "conscience clauses" that exempt institutions affiliated with churches from providing their employees certain benefits such churches consider objectionable. For example, the Diocese of Rochester does not offer health plans to employees that cover contraception, and neither do most dioceses in the country. However, the Assembly's version of the Women's Health and Wellness Act would force the diocese to reverse its policy.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver has made it clear he opposes the conscience clause concept. And although Senate and Assembly members are working on compromise versions of these bills, a spokeswoman for Silver told the *Catholic Courier* that the inclusion of such clauses was unacceptable. Such clauses are "make-or-break" provisions for the bills that would also mandate coverage for such medical services as cancer detection exams for women and drugs for osteoporosis, the spokeswoman said.

Will the state



Linda Jeanne Rivers

"The fact that people may not share the religion of their employer, may not share the beliefs of their employer, (yet) can be bound to the religious beliefs of their employer is taking religious freedom a little too far," Silver said in late January about conscience clauses.

The speaker was criticized both by official church leaders and lay Catholic leaders for his statement.

"Religious freedom, as far as we're concerned, is a cherished principle in our democracy and very difficult to take too far," said Dennis Poust, associate director for communications for the New York State Catholic Conference. Poust was interviewed by phone from his Albany office where the conference serves as the state's bishops' lobbying arm.

William Donohoe, president of the independent lay group Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights in New York City, responded to Silver's remarks with a statement even more critical than Poust's.

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STORY BY ROB CULLIVAN