

# Cardinals gather for consistory

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In the largest meeting of its kind ever held at the Vatican, more than 150 cardinals joined Pope John Paul II to discuss questions of collegiality, dialogue and evangelization in the church.

The pope opened the May 21-24 consistory with a prayer and a request for the cardinals' input, saying he wanted a free and fraternal exchange of opinions.

In response, the cardinals lined up to speak on a wide range of topics, including the role of the papacy and the need to improve relations between the Vatican and local church communities.

Two suggestions came from U.S. cardi-

nals: preparation of a document that would clarify what the church means by "new evangelization" and an annual worldwide Synod of Bishops with an open agenda, aimed at providing more communication and unity of purpose within the church.

Other cardinals focused on renewal of personal holiness, pastoral problems of the family, challenges of ecumenism, opportunities offered by modern media, and the demands of justice and charity in globalization.

In a welcoming talk May 21, the pope avoided specifics. He said the church needs to find the best ways to evangelize in mod-

ern societies, prioritizing its goals and evaluating every level of its pastoral operations.

He described the meeting as a follow-up to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and to his recent document, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium"), which outlined pastoral aims and obstacles for the coming years.

Three prelates were chosen to moderate the discussions: Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, dean of the College of Cardinals; Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; and Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican secretary of state.



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Pope John Paul II requests free and fraternal exchange of opinions among the cardinals at the consistory.



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## Inside This Week

**Prayer to certain people, discuss**  
— Page 2



**Monks celebrate**  
— Page 3

**Complex mark**  
— Page 19, 20

**Many students**  
— Page 21



Abbot John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO, walks a path in front of the Abbey of the Genesee on May 3.

## Monks celebrate 50th anniversary of 'spiritual gold mine'

PIFFARD — From here, the call to monastic life can be so clear that it cuts through the picturesque hills of Livingston County, bursts beyond New York state's borders and sails straight into the souls of young men across the country.

Such a call led Brother Theodore Daly, OCSO, and Father Francis Steger, OCSO, to western New York some 50 years ago. Of the 42 Cistercians of the Strict Observance at the Abbey of the Genesee, Brother Daly and Father Steger are the two remaining monks who have lived there since the monastery's first year. Their lengthy stays, they said, have been time well spent.

"I was an ordinary city boy, and I walked into a spiritual gold mine," said Brother Daly, 73, a Philadelphia native, who came with the first group of monks to Piffard in April 1951.

"I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world," added Father Steger, 72, who grew up in Missouri and Minnesota and arrived in the Genesee Valley in October 1951.

Meanwhile, Father Albert Wentz, OC-

SO, took up residence at the Abbey of the Genesee 24 years ago. The change in environs from his native Queens, he said, was like night and day.

"This is country," said Father Wentz, 45. "I couldn't figure out why God wanted me to be here — but I felt strongly about being here."

The monastery's 31 brothers and 11 priests have planned a 50th-year anniversary Mass for Saturday, May 26, at 1:30 p.m. This event will celebrate a Trappist lifestyle formed over many centuries that, according to Father Steger, "emphasized prayer, work and study."

Some people may wonder why these men would commit their entire adulthood to a cloistered community — but the reasons are clear to Father John Eudes Bamberger, OCSO. He has served as the monastery's abbot, or head, the past 30 years.

"Here, I've always experienced cooperation and friendliness. So I've always been happy here," said Abbot Bamberger. In accordance with his order's regulations, Abbot Bamberger will retire upon reaching his 75th birthday Aug. 24 and the monks will elect a new abbot in the fall.

Monastic life, Father Bamberger explained, "was set up to provide a setting to be as free as possible to give one's time, energies, thoughts and interests to what is most important. A monk considers that to be God. The ones who don't consider it a freedom almost always leave."

"Our ambition isn't to make money or be famous," Father Steger remarked. "Anybody who wants that would be miserable here, just bored stiff."

Continued on page 21