

WORLD & NATION

Pope celebrates birthday, canonizes 5 new saints

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II struggled through a busy birthday weekend at the Vatican, canonizing five new saints and meeting with 7,000 youths who came to help celebrate his 82 years and wish him many more.

But even as he joined in the festivities with young people May 18, the pope acknowledged his physical decline when he let an aide read part of his speech to the cheering, scarf-waving crowd.

Celebrating a Mass May 19 to proclaim five European saints, the pope sat with his head tilted down and pronounced liturgical prayers with a tremulous voice. At times he appeared to have trouble breathing.

When the liturgy was over he asked Catholics to keep praying for him.

At the start of the Mass, Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, dean of the College of Cardinals, expressed day-after birthday wishes, telling the pope that canonizations were the kind of ceremony that "make your heart more youthful."

Hundreds of birthday wishes flooded into the Vatican from heads of state and other dignitaries, and several religious groups in Rome brought homemade cakes to the Vatican doors. The pope held a working lunch with four of his top aides on the special day.

The celebrations were partly overshadowed by renewed speculation over papal retirement, after three cardinals — including Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, one of the pope's top aides — said they thought the pontiff would retire if he ever reached the point where he could not carry out the duties of the papacy.

None of the prelates said that time had arrived, however. On May 15, the pope responded to birthday greetings at a general audience, saying he relied on the spiritual

Abuse

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take psychological tests to discover an inclination to commit abuse would violate his right to privacy under church law.

If an abusive priest is reassigned to a parish after psychological therapy, Father Ghirlanda said that informing the new parishioners of the past abuse would violate the priest's "good reputation" and delegitimize him in the eyes of parishioners. If the bishop thinks he could commit another such crime, it would be better not to reassign him to a parish, he said.

Father Ghirlanda wrote extensively about the risk of false accusations against priests, either by lying individuals or in "defamation campaigns" by the mass media, and the damage that can be done if such accusations are made public.

He said it was a bishop's duty to root out such calumny and protect the church community from its effects. A Catholic who makes such an accusation sins gravely, he said.

"All the more serious is the behavior of a false accuser if he has introduced an action in the civil forum with the aim of extorting money," he said.

support of the faithful "in order to continue faithfully in the ministry the Lord has entrusted to me."

For the pope, the birthday was a working day, but students from Christian Brothers' schools in Italy turned it into a celebration, singing "Happy Birthday" in several versions. The pope looked tired as he was rolled into the Paul VI audience hall on his wheeled platform, but extended his hand in greeting and kissed a baby.

In what was clearly a planned move, he read only the beginning and end of his two-page talk to the group and sat listening as an aide read the longer middle section.

The Christian Brothers were celebrating the 300th anniversary of their activity in Italy, and the pope encouraged them to maintain their educational ministry among today's young people.

Afterward, the pope greeted the young people as they crowded around him for a blessing on the stage of the audience hall.

On the way back to his apartment, he took time to sprinkle holy water on a new statue, an image of St. Maria Josefa del Corazon de Jesus Sancho de Guerra, that had just been placed in a niche on the exterior of St. Peter's Basilica.

The next day, the pope celebrated the canonization Mass under intermittent rain in St. Peter's Square, proclaiming as saints five members of religious orders — four Italians and one Spaniard.

In a sermon that he read in its entirety, the pope said the five had preached and lived the Gospel "on the streets of the world," just as modern Christians should do.

The new saints are:

- St. Ignatius of Santhia, an 18th-century Italian Capuchin known for his ministry as a confessor and spiritual adviser.

- St. Umile da Bisignano, a Franciscan friar considered a "slow learner," but who showed gifts of mysticism and demonstrated a life of deep prayer up to the moment of his death in 1637. The pope said the Italian friar's humility and simplicity were qualities needed in today's material world.

- St. Pauline of the Suffering Heart of Jesus, an Italian who founded the Little Sis-



Alessia Giullani/Catholic Press Photo

Pilgrims take cover from the rain as they participate in a canonization Mass with Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square May 19.

ters of the Immaculate Conception, dedicated to serving the poor, sick and elderly. She died in 1942 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Her order is active throughout South America and Africa.

- St. Benedetta Cambagio, a 19th-century Italian who lived as a married woman for two years and then agreed with her husband to live chastely, as "brother and sister." The two eventually entered religious orders, and St. Benedetta founded a congregation of the Benedictine Sisters of Providence, which worked with young girls.

- St. Alphonsus of Orozco, a 16th-century Spanish Augustinian friar, who devoted his life to the needy and wrote ascetical and mystical works.

The pope, seated beneath a canopy as the rain turned heavy, gave a noon blessing after the Mass and read a short talk with obvious difficulty.

He thanked everyone for the birthday wishes and in particular for the "special prayers for my person and for the fulfillment of my Petrine (papal) service, entrusted me by the Lord."

Prelate regrets harm former policy caused

BOSTON (CNS) — "I wish I could undo the hurt and harm" of previous policy failures on clergy sex abuse of children, Boston Cardinal Bernard F. Law said May 19 in a three-page letter to his people.

He devoted much of the letter to defending his failure to remove Father Paul R. Shanley from ministry until 1993, declaring "before God" that he did not know of the priest's alleged sexual predations before then.

Father Shanley, 71, currently faces criminal child rape charges and has been accused of molesting children in a number of civil lawsuits filed against him and the Boston Archdiocese.

On May 17 Cardinal Law met with the Cardinal's Commission for the Protection of Children, formed earlier this year to review and strengthen archdiocesan policy and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors.

The commission presented him with a

draft of its preliminary report and policy review.

Among its recommendations were:

- Zero tolerance, meaning complete removal from ministry of any priest who has sexually abused a minor.

- Formation of an independent lay review board with final say on all cases.

- Training groups of lay people in every parish to watch over the safety of children.

- Mandatory reporting of all allegations to state authorities.

Donna M. Morrissey, archdiocesan spokeswoman, said the cardinal "reacted favorably" to the commission's recommendations and "looks forward to sharing the recommendations" with the rest of the U.S. bishops when they meet June 13-15 in Dallas. At that meeting they plan to establish a binding national policy on the issue.

Cardinal Law declined to receive an honorary degree May 18 from Hellenic College, a small Greek Orthodox college in Brookline, which had been offered before the current sex abuse scandal broke out. Morrissey said the cardinal wanted the graduates and their families to "enjoy the joyful occasion free of distraction."

A month earlier Cardinal Law had announced that he would not attend May 20 commencement exercises at Jesuit-run Boston College. The Catholic campus is just across the street from Cardinal Law's residence and archdiocesan offices and

he usually attends its graduation ceremonies.

In his May 19 letter, Cardinal Law spoke about the "seemingly never-ending repercussions" of the archdiocesan clergy sex abuse scandal that has occupied the city's newspaper pages and evening newscasts on an almost daily basis since early January.

"The scandalous and painful details which have emerged sear our hearts," he wrote. "The harm done to victims and their families is overwhelming."

"Bewilderment has given rise to anger and distrust," he continued. "In the process, my credibility has been publicly questioned and I have become for some an object of contempt. I understand how this is so, and I am profoundly sorry that the inadequacy of past policies and flaws in past decisions have contributed to this situation."

With regard to the Shanley case, he said, "When I arrived in Boston in 1984, I assumed that priests in place had been appropriately appointed."

"Before God, I assure you that my first knowledge of an allegation of sexual abuse against this priest was in 1993," Cardinal Law wrote. "It was immediately acted upon, and the authorization for him to serve as a priest in California was rescinded. I was not aware until these recent months of the allegations against him from as early as 1966."

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