

Pope ordains 31 priests in Rome

John Thavis/CNS

VATICAN CITY — Presiding over an annual liturgy dear to his heart, Pope John Paul II ordained 31 new priests and urged them to model their lives on Christ, the good shepherd.

"The priest, called in a special way to aim for holiness, is for the whole Christian people the witness of Christ's love and joy," the pope said during the Mass in St. Peter's Basilica May 11, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

The newly ordained all completed their priestly studies in the Diocese of Rome. They included 17 from Italy, five from the United States, two from Colombia and one each from Albania, Canada, France, Germany, Ivory Coast, South Korea and Uruguay.

In his sermon, the pope said that as pastors the new priests should "know their flock one by one" and establish with them a relationship of understanding so deep that they would be willing to give their lives

for them.

He outlined what he said were the primary qualities that the church and the world expect of a good priest.

"The priest is a man of the word, whose task is to bring the Gospel to the men and women of his time. He must do this with a strong sense of responsibility, committing himself to be always in harmony with the church's magisterium," he said.

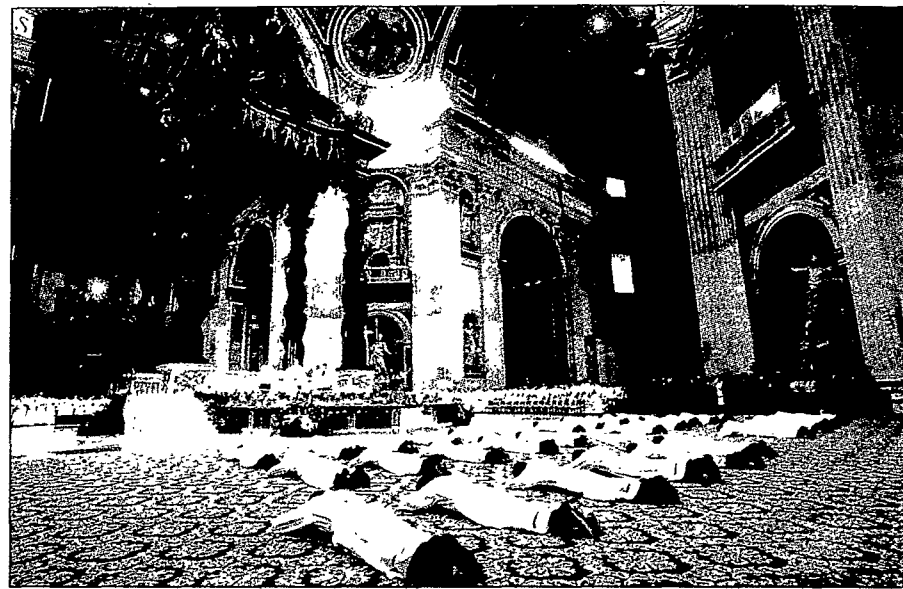
The priest is also a man of the Eucharist and prayer, the pope said.

He said priests should be ministers of mercy, above all by hearing confessions.

"You will become witnesses of how many miracles and wonders are worked through God's mercy in the confessional," he said.

The pope also advised the young priests to regularly make use of the sacrament of penance and allow themselves to be guided by spiritual advisers.

Addressing the thousands from the Diocese of Rome who packed the



Reuters/CNS

Thirty-one men prostrate themselves before the altar of St. Peter's Basilica during their ordination May 11 on World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Pope John Paul II presided at the service, calling on new priests to model their lives after Christ, the good shepherd.

basilica, the pope asked them to "be close to your priests" and pray for them as they carry out their pastoral ministry.

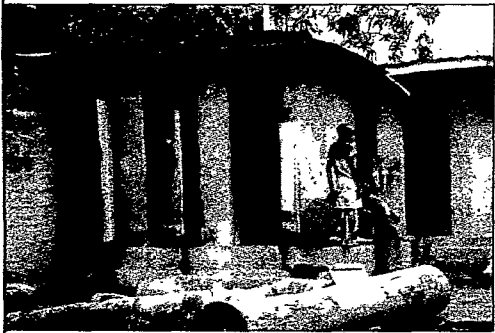
As he has done at other recent liturgies, the pope celebrated Mass seated on a wheeled chair with a built-in pneumatic lift. He laid hands on the heads of each new priest and recited a prayer asking that they be models of living for Catholics in

their care.

Afterward, speaking at a noon blessing from his apartment window, the pope underlined the service role of priests everywhere.

"Let us pray so that these new priests, and all the priests of the world, conform their lives more and more to Christ, the servant of the Lord, who came not to be served but to serve," he said.

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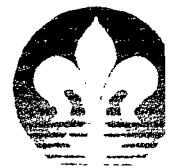
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