

Pope's health questioned

John Thavis/CNS



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Nuns and other pilgrims wave to Pope John Paul II as he is driven through the crowd in St. Peter's Square following the canonization Mass for three 19th-century missionary priests Oct. 5.

HOUSE APPROVES PARTIAL-BIRTH BAN

WASHINGTON (CNS) — After a House-Senate conference committee stripped it of a provision affirming *Roe v. Wade* legislation that would ban partial-birth abortion again passed the House Oct. 2.

But approval of the conference committee version was likely to take much longer in the Senate, where the amendment on *Roe v. Wade* was originally passed.

Although supporters of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act hoped to take it to senators Oct. 3, before a 10-day congressional recess began, many believed the Senate was not likely to take up the legislation until after Oct. 13.

POPE CANONIZES THREE MISSIONARIES

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — On Oct. 5, Pope John Paul II canonized three priests who dedicated their lives to missionary activity.

The three men declared saints Oct. 5 were Daniel Comboni, founder of the Comboni missionary priests and sisters; Arnold Janssen, founder of the Divine Word missionaries and the Holy Spirit missionary sisters; and Joseph Fremademetz, a Divine Word missionary to China in the late 1800s.

BISHOP APPOINTS PASTORAL LEADER

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following pastoral appointment, which was effective Sept. 29.

• **Father Sean McEntee, OMI**, to parochial vicar at Church of the Assumption, Fairport.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sun., Oct. 12: Wisdom 7:7-11; Psalms 90:12-17; Hebrews 4:12-13; Mark 10:17-30 or 10:17-27.

Mon., Oct. 13: Romans 1:1-7; Psalms 98:1-4; Luke 11:29-32.

Tue., Oct. 14: Romans 1:16-25; Psalms 19:2-5; Luke 11:37-41.

Wed., Oct. 15: Romans 2:1-11; Psalms 62:2-3, 6-7, 9; Luke 11:42-46.

Thu., Oct. 16: Romans 3:21-30; Psalms 130:1-6; Luke 11:47-54.

Fri., Oct. 17: Romans 4:1-8; Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 11; Luke 12:1-7.

Sat., Oct. 18: 2 Timothy 4:10-17B; Psalms 145:10-13AB, 17-18; Luke 10:1-9.

VATICAN CITY — At the beginning of one of the busiest months of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II's continuing health problems prompted speculation in the media, concern among some cardinals and prayers by the faithful.

After announcing the names of 30 new cardinals Sept. 28, the 83-year-old pontiff carried out a full week of scheduled events — holding talks with international leaders, meeting with bishops and church groups, presiding over a general audience, welcoming the new Anglican primate and celebrating a canonization Mass for three new saints.

He went through his schedule appearing much as he has over the last few months: tired, unable to stand or walk, struggling at times to speak, but soldiering on to the end of each event.

His recent physical decline, although not drastic to those who have followed him closely, has prompted intense media interest, which in turn has generated comments by church leaders.

The most striking remarks — intended “philosophically” but which ended up in headlines around the world — came from Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna, Austria.

“The entire world is experiencing a pope who is sick, who is disabled, and who is dying — I don't know how near death he is — who is approaching the last days and months of his life,” Cardinal Schonborn told the Austrian state radio ORF Oct. 2.

The cardinal's comment prompted anxiety among many Catholics. Some church groups sent e-mail alerts for prayers on the pope's behalf. Several Vatican cardinals, however, quickly downplayed concern about the pope's health.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, head of the Congregation for Bishops, said “there's no cause for alarm” about the pontiff.

“The pope is a strong man with a sharp mind and a clear vision of the world. I saw him today at lunch,” Cardinal Re said later Oct. 2.

Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, head of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, said the fact that the pope's October schedule was being maintained showed there was no sense of panic at the Vatican.

“The pope and all of us are in the hands of God. I think this alarmism about his health needs to be moderated considerably,” he said Oct. 2.

Polish Archbishop Stanislaw Dziwisz, the pope's longtime personal secretary, did not seem overly con-

cerned about the pope's health as he chatted with reporters Oct. 2. The pope was meeting with Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas in an adjacent room.

On Sept. 30, the German magazine *Bunte* quoted Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as saying in an interview that the pope was “in a bad way” and that people should pray for him.

But the cardinal's secretary, Msgr. Georg Ganswein, told Catholic News Service that the cardinal's remarks were taken out of context and did not reflect a new sense of alarm over the pope's well-being.

What happened, Msgr. Ganswein said, was that Cardinal Ratzinger met Sept. 22 with representatives of two German beer companies and was explaining to them why the pope could not grant them a private audience. Apparently journalists in the group picked up some of the cardinal's comments.

“The cardinal said, certainly, we all have to pray for the pope. The pope himself asked us to do this.

But that is something that can be said at any time,” Msgr. Ganswein said.

As for the pope's health, he said, Cardinal Ratzinger was “more or less expressing what anyone can see with their eyes and hear with their ears, that the pope is not well and speaks only with difficulty.”

“All this was not said in any manner that could give a sense of alarm. Not at all,” the cardinal's secretary said.

Even as the pope's health issues were making news around the world, the Vatican added two major events to the pope's already heavy October schedule.

The pontiff will preside over a public consistory with the new cardinals Oct. 21, officially inducting them into the College of Cardinals and handing each cardinal the traditional “red hat.”

On Oct. 22, the pope will concelebrate Mass with the new cardinals in St. Peter's Square. During the liturgy, the pope will present each cardinal with a ring designating his new office.