

Pope celebrates his 84th

Cindy Woodent/NS

VATICAN CITY Although there was a birthday cake and a special lunch, Pope John Paul II's birthday also was "an ordinary day of work," the Vatican spokesman said.

The pope celebrated his 84th birthday May 18.

"For the Holy Father it will be an ordinary day of work and, especially, of thanking God for the gift of life," said Joaquin Navarro Valls, Vatican spokesman.

The only change from the pope's normal schedule, he said, was that the pope had invited "his closest collaborators from the Curia" to lunch.

The spokesman said birthday greetings from heads of state and from individuals around the world had arrived in the pope's mailbox.

An e-mail address was open as well.

As it does on special occasions, the Vatican's Internet office opened a special electronic address john.paul@vatican.va for papal birthday greetings.

During the ordinary part of his workday, Pope John Paul met with Portugal's prime minister and witnessed the signing of a new treaty



GNS

Pope John Paul II awaits the arrival of Portugal's prime minister May 18 at the Vatican. The meeting on the pontiff's 84th birthday was part of a typical workday for the pope, said the Vatican spokesman.

regulating relations between the Catholic Church and the country. The treaty, guaranteeing the juridical status of the church and religious freedom, updated a concordat signed in 1940.

The visiting delegation sang "Happy Birthday" to the pope in Portuguese. The same tune was used a short time later, when members of

the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers sang their birthday greetings at an audience with the pope.

The pope also met with four U.S. bishops making their *ad limina* visits to Rome to report on the status of their dioceses. They were: Archbishop Eusebius J. Beltran of Oklahoma City; Bishop J. Peter Sartain and retired Bishop Andrew J. McDonald of Little Rock, Ark.; and Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer of San Angelo, Texas.

Archbishop Beltran, who was making his sixth *ad limina* visit, said his meeting with Pope John Paul was the normal, wonderful *ad limina* experience.

"I did take the occasion to extend birthday wishes to him," the archbishop said. "He had a big smile, was very gracious and very happy."

Archbishop Beltran said the pope was as interested as ever in what is going on in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, asking specific questions about vocations to the priesthood and religious life, the faith life of the people and ecumenical initiatives.

"He is a great listener," the archbishop said. "He actually does listen."

DIocese RECEIVES ACHIEVEMENT HONOR

The Diocese of Rochester has received a national honor recognizing its Priests' Council.

A Council Achievement Award was presented by Father Robert J. Silva, president of the National Federation of Priests' Councils, during its annual convention held April 19-22 in Atlanta. Accepting on behalf of the diocese was Father Douglas Della Pietra, pastor of Church of the Good Shepherd in Henrietta.

Award criteria include frequency of meetings; shared governance; participation; and perceived effectiveness. According to a citation issued by the council, "Bishop Matthew H. Clark has made the Rochester council a priority. He is present for the entirety of every monthly meeting. He also meets the following day with council's executive committee to prepare for the following month's meeting. A dynamic of trust and openness marks the Rochester council. The bishop expects that input not only summarize a region's thinking, but that council members develop an informed perspective or opinion on that thinking."

Bishop Clark

Congratulations

on your 25th Anniversary
as Bishop of the
Rochester Diocese

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ST. JOACHIM'S CHURCH, CANISTEO

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, REXVILLE