

IS THE POPE A PRISONER?

by John Haffert

A widely quoted person, whom many believe to be a mystic, says that the Holy Father is a prisoner and that an imposter is in his place, directed by a certain Cardinal and two Bishops.

Could this be true?

I was in Rome when Paul VI was elected. I was there when he was first carried into St. Peter's. I had one of the first audiences with him at that time. Since then I have seen him "close up" dozens of times...close enough to touch him and kiss his ring. One most recent visit with the Pope was unusual.

The Doors Were Closed

I was asked by a Bishop to carry a special request to the Holy Father. I had no trouble getting an audience and in presenting the request, but His Holiness did not at once give an answer. He merely said "I will consider it". So a month later I went back to Rome for the answer. This time I encountered what might be the basis of the statement that the Pope is a "prisoner".

This time I could not get an audience. All doors were closed. Furthermore, everyone on the "inner circle" and its circumference seemed to know about the request I had brought to Rome. They told me that a few powerful prelates very close to the Pope were opposed to it and had closed the doors.

It was two months before I finally got to speak to the Holy Father personally.* Meanwhile I had prepared careful documentation (about an inch high) which I had sent through a channel which I felt to be open. My first question to the Holy Father was:

"Your Holiness, it is not so much that I ask for an answer but whether Your Holiness is fully informed about the request." Somewhat to my surprise, Pope Paul answered:

"I have read every one of the documents which you sent to me."

"Oh," I said, "then I am satisfied" (because I knew His Holiness would decide properly one way or another).

Then came the greater surprise.

Difficult for the Pope?

The decision seemed simple (and in due time the Holy Father agreed) yet His Holiness indicated that *there was opposition which made it difficult*. He had terminated the conversation and was starting away when he turned back and said:

"Pray for me."

(Incidentally, some may think I was asking the Holy Father about the collegial consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but it was something far simpler.)

"What *opposition* around the Holy Father," I asked myself, "could make difficult for him a decision *in which he himself believed?*"

The Great Storm

Most of us think the Holy Father is free to say or do whatever he decides. But in a sense he IS a prisoner not only of the Vatican (from which he cannot in a sense journey freely because of political proprieties) but OF US ALL. He is one of the Popes (and perhaps the principal one) seen by St. John Bosco in a vision of the bark of Peter (the Church) in a great

Editor's Note: Elsewhere in this issue of SOUL read the article "On the Ninth Anniversary of Pope Paul's visit to Fatima"...and on the prophecies of Our Lady of Fatima concerning the Pope made by Jacinta.

storm following an Ecumenical Council...anxiously guiding her through waves threatening to engulf her...towards the twin pillars of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin. (In St. John's vision the sea became calm after the Pope succeeded in securing the Church to those pillars.)

We ask why the Pope doesn't do or say this or that *as though there were no storm*. And how many of us pray for him?

Messages DO get through to the Holy Father (see *The Pope Knows*, page 9). Not even counting the fact that he is the Vicar of Christ...with all the graces conferred by Jesus Himself through the apostolic succession...*he hears the voices of Heaven far more than we do!*

Have We Forgotten?

Those of us who interpret messages from "mystics" make the grave mistake of taking to ourselves a right (and responsibility!) of judgment for which we are not competent.

And we may, in this way, be aiding the waves of Hell trying to engulf this safe bark...where Jesus is present even when He seems to sleep.

God permits the opposition. He permits the storm. He permits even that it should seem that the Church is being swamped.

But oh, how can we who have heard the message of Fatima and the promise of Our Lady of Fatima be among those of little faith?

There IS a storm. The Pope IS besieged. Let us realize this with a sense of loving responsibility...and prayer.