

# REPORT FROM ROME

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**T**wo Congresses took place in Rome at Pentecost which were hailed by the Pope as a sign of the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Holy Year, *renewal and reconciliation*.

Put in other words these goals are the inner conversion of all to true *holiness* (renewal); the return of sinners, and Christian unity (reconciliation). One event in Rome which the Pope said filled him "with joy and hope" was the Marian Congress, inaugurated by His Holiness on the eve of Pentecost.

On Pentecost itself, this group was at the Pope's Mass followed immediately afterwards by the blessing in Saint Peter's Square before one of the largest crowds of the Holy Year. Before giving the blessing, the Pope led a prayer to Our Lady as "Mother of the Church" and "Spouse of the Holy Ghost".

Over seven thousand Americans were in Rome for the occasion. Perhaps few of them, let alone the rest of the world, fully realized what an important occasion it was. Only later, in carefully analyzing the Pope's messages to the two Congresses in the light of the Pentecost message itself (the Pope's Sunday homily) did it

become apparent that the Holy Father was rejoicing in anticipation of a "New Pentecost" in the Church gathered mystically again "in that upper room", the Pope said, "together with Mary."

To give special emphasis to the importance of Mary's role in the program of the Holy Year, the Pope left the Vatican to go to the hall on the Via Manzoni where the Marian Congress was to be held after saying a special Mass for the Congress in Saint Mary Major's. It was the first time the Pope had ever left the Vatican to inaugurate a Marian Congress, and His Holiness personally invited several Cardinals to accompany him. They included his Vicar for Rome (Cardinal Poletti), and Cardinal Slipyj...who just a week before had presented to His Holiness a petition from Bishop John Venancio of Fatima (International President of the Blue Army) for the consecration of the world to the Sacred Heart and of Russia to the Immaculate Heart (on June 6 and 7) together with all the Bishops of the world.

## BLESSING FOR BLUE ARMY

On Pentecost Monday, Bishop Venancio together with Cardinal Suenens and five other Bishops

was invited by the Pope to give the blessing to the some twenty thousand present for the special audience on that day. Just before the blessing, Bishop Venancio said to the Holy Father:

"Would Your Holiness also bless every member of the Blue Army throughout the world?"

His Holiness nodded agreement.

Just before this audience, in his apartment just across the garden from Saint Peter's Basilica where the audience was held, Cardinal Slipyj received a few of the top leaders of the Blue Army (including this writer) and reported:

## OPPOSITION

"In April I sent in writing the petition to the Holy Father for the consecration (of June 6-7) and on May 5th I spoke personally with His Holiness in private audience for an hour. I myself have received opposition to this consecration but I pray that it may be accomplished."

Cardinal Slipyj indicated that the Holy Father himself was facing certain problems in fulfilling the petition (especially by June 6-7) but His Eminence said a *major factor*, in his own judgment, is the *number of letters being received*

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ON MAY 17, POPE PAUL VI OPENED THE MARIAN CONGRESS IN ROME. SEATED IN FRONT ROW (DISTINGUISHABLE BY WHITE HEADGEAR) IS CARDINAL SLIPYJ. SUBJECT OF THE CONGRESS WAS "MARY AND THE HOLY GHOST". BLUE ARMY LEADER JOHN HAFERT WAS ONE OF THE SPEAKERS IN THE ENGLISH SECTION.

from all over the world in support of the petition.

"There are over 200,000 so far," His Eminence said, "and I believe that at the rate they are coming they will eventually exceed half a million."

We asked His Eminence if these letters of support should continue. He replied:

### "FILL THE ROOM"

"Bring them! Fill this room!" and His Eminence opened his arms in a wide gesture that would have welcomed not only half a million petitions, but millions.

"Each week," His Eminence added, "a member of my household takes all the letters over to the Secretary of the Pope." And His Eminence said that this would continue as long as the petitions arrive.

### THE QUESTION

To the Marian Congress Bishop Venancio spoke of the importance of this consecration which had been requested by Our Lord and Our Lady at Fatima. He said that when Pope Paul renewed this consecration in the Council on November 21, 1964, "all the Bishops of the world were present,

but perhaps that did not fulfill exactly what Our Lady asked and that is why we have petitioned His Holiness to renew the consecration once again while inviting all the Bishops to participate."

### UNCERTAINTY

Abbe Andre Richard of Paris, International Vice-President of the Blue Army, had a long private audience with Pope Paul after the Council and specifically asked whether His Holiness felt that the renewal of the consecration in the Council has fulfilled the request of Our Lady of Fatima. The Pope did not answer affirmatively but gave Abbe Richard to understand that his Apostolate should be satisfied that at least so great a step had already been taken.

On that same Pentecost Monday when Bishop Venancio (International President of the Blue Army) stood with the Pope to bless the thousands gathered in Saint Peter's Basilica for the "Pentecost" audience, another significant event took place.

### WELL-KNOWN NAME

In the meeting with Cardinal Slipyj (just before the audience) His Eminence was presented with a packet of many thousands of petitions from Portugal and, with them, a petition signed by all the Carmelite Nuns of Coimbra.

On the fourth line was the signature of Lucia...sole survivor of the three children who saw Our Lady of Fatima.

*To His Eminence, Josef Cardinal Slipyj,  
Vatican City (Italy).*

*Your Eminence: I rejoice that you will present the petition to the Holy Father for the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I support this petition with my fervent prayers for its success and for your Eminence and all those persecuted for their Faith.*

*Signature*