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ARCHBISHOP JEAN JADOT Sees Major Problems in the Future

By Jim Castelli, printed in the November 11, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

WASHINGTON (NC)



A shortage of priests, the largeness of Church communities and the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities are three major problems facing the American Catholic Church in the next few years, according to Archbishop Jean Jadot, apostolic delegate in the United States.

He made his comments in an unusually frank address to the general meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops here. Archbishop Jadot said the church would face a severe priest shortage "at most within 10 years." Even if there is an increase of vocations in the next few years as he expects, he said, "We must be prepared for a shortage of priests for a generation to come."

"Already there are parishes in which two priests are trying with the same pastoral approaches to do what four priests did a few years ago," Archbishop Jadot said. "In some regions, priests are dying in their 50s from overwork. Others are chronically tired and frustrated because they cannot accomplish by themselves what several priests together accomplished in the past."

"There are solutions open to us," Archbishop Jadot said, "if we are willing to set priorities; if we are willing to give greater responsibilities to the laity, both men and women; if we make more effective use of permanent deacons and extraordinary ministers."

Concerning the size of Catholic communities, Archbishop Jadot said: "People today, and especially young people, are searching for a group in which they can find a true communion of faith, of worship and of commitment. Many are suffering from a certain kind of loneliness. They experience a need to identify with others who share their yearning for a more communal life."

"Church leaders," he said, "will have to work with the laity to develop new patterns of parochial life and, perhaps, new forms of parochial organization so that the parish can become "a community of small communities."

Concerning racial and ethnic minorities, Archbishop Jadot said: "I wonder if the majority of our priests and people realize our shortcomings in these areas and even our arrogance toward our

brothers and sisters in the faith who are in some ways different from ourselves. I wonder if we can ever fully understand the legitimate frustrations that they feel.”

The Church faces two main problems in dealing with minorities, Archbishop Jadot said. “First, how are we to give pastoral care to those who do not feel at home with our white, Western European ways of public worship and community living, to those who have not adapted and do not want to adapt to what we call our American way of doing things?...

“Secondly, how are we to foster the unity of the people of God within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church while at the same time preserving the diversity that is one of the riches of this great country?

Biographical Overview of Archbishop Jadot’s Life

Taken from a 2009 *New York Time* article written by Douglas Martin

Jean Jadot was born in Brussels on November 23, 1909. His family was wealthy, and his father, Lambert, was a master engineer who built railroads, electrical systems and mines around the world. Jean earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium at age 21.

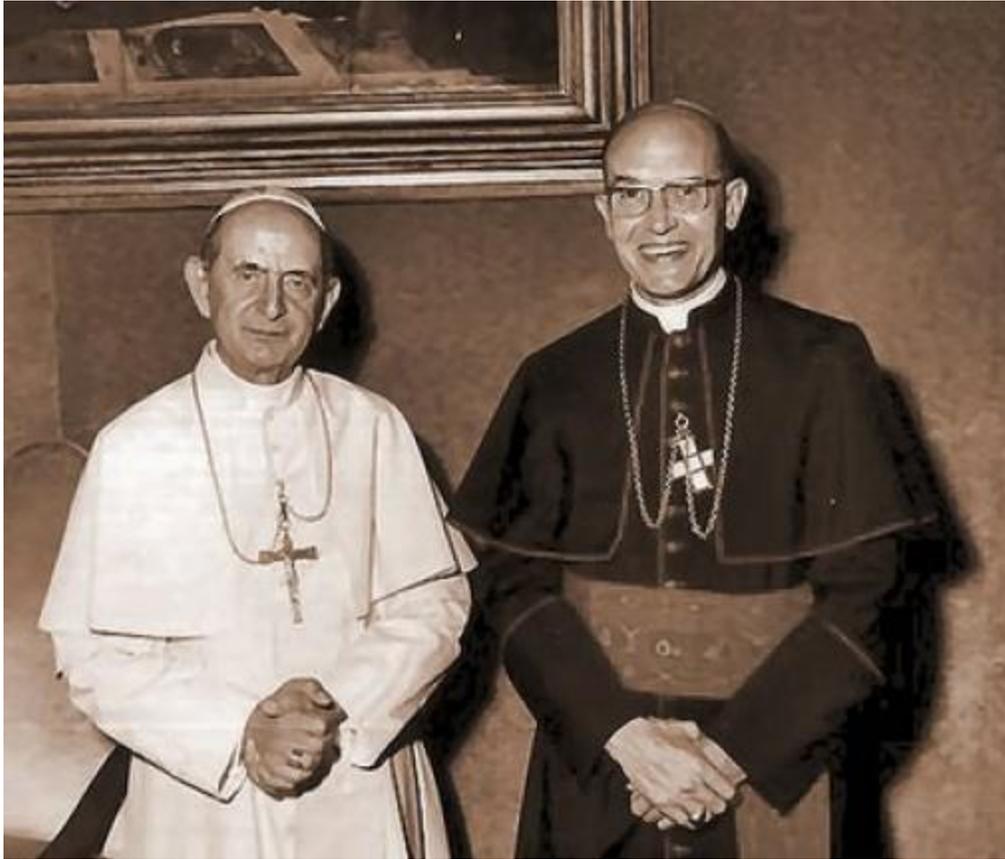
He rebuffed his father’s pleas to lead a secular life and was ordained a priest in 1934. He became a pastor in a Brussels suburb and elsewhere in Belgium. From 1952 to 1960, he was chaplain to troops in what was then the Belgian Congo. He then worked as an official in the church’s missionary programs.

In May 1968, he was ordained as a bishop. From 1968 to 1971, he was a papal delegate to Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia. From 1971 to 1973, he filled this role in Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

In the spring of 1973, Pope Paul VI selected Archbishop Jadot to be his Apostolic Nuncio to the United States. The pope plucked him from relative obscurity to press the American church to carry out the reforms of Vatican II, over whose final sessions the pope had presided. Pope Paul told Jadot he was chosen partly because he was not part of the Vatican bureaucracy, and thus might not be as pliable in the hands of powerful American bishops. The pope asked the archbishop “not to be the pope’s eyes and ears, but his heart,” Archbishop Jadot said in an interview with *The London Tablet* in 2002. He wanted Jadot, as envoy, to show the pope’s concern “for the poor, the forgotten, the ignored.”

Although Archbishop Jadot strongly adhered to most of the church’s teachings, including its opposition to abortion, his willingness to leave some questions, like artificial contraception, to individual consciences rankled some church leaders. But the pope refused an offer he made to resign, saying he was “doing just what I want you to do,” according to Jadot’s biographer Dr. John Dick.

Archbishop Jadot turned what had been a largely ceremonial position into a bully pulpit for the



seven years ending in 1980.

Photo taken from the Internet

Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Jean Jadot

He helped lead a largely successful effort to push the American church to welcome minorities, widen the role of women, increase participation by the laity and relax some rules, like the penalty of excommunication for divorced Catholics who remarried without an annulment of the previous marriage and while the previous spouse was still alive.

Dr. Dick, a theologian, said Wednesday in an interview that the archbishop's vision of the church was "a community of faith, not a hierarchical organization."

Bishops and other church leaders railed at what was seen as rabble-rousing by Archbishop Jadot, and he received a stream of anonymous hate mail. A close friend in Rome told him "they" were "out to get him," Dr. Dick wrote online on Wednesday in *The National Catholic Reporter*.

Archbishop Jadot submitted lists of three nominees for each opening as a bishop, as was customary. In almost all instances, Pope Paul VI chose the one nominee whom Archbishop Jadot indicated he preferred, Dr. Dick said.

The result was that he was responsible for the appointments of more than 100 new bishops, Dr. Dick said. At one time, Dr. Dick said, more than a third of all American bishops were Archbishop Jadot's choices. They were called "Jadot's boys."

With time, conservative bishops appointed under the papacy of John Paul II largely replaced "Jadot's boys." But some critics still say that the church's sex scandals are linked to appointments made by Archbishop Jadot, saying they were ill advised. Dr. Dick, who discussed the subject with Archbishop Jadot, responded in the interview that the scandals surprised and saddened the archbishop but that he accepted no blame for them.

In 1980, Archbishop Jadot was called back to the Vatican to help lead ecumenical initiatives. When he left, Robert L. Robinson, a member of the National Black Lay Catholic Caucus, said in an interview with The Washington Post: "Isn't that a damn shame? The black people have lost a friend. He let us know that Rome was very much concerned about the black question."

As a Washington Post article said in 1983: "Whatever their background, the new breed of bishops was less concerned with the ring-kissing and watered-silk vestments that went with the office, and more with getting to know their people. They moved out of episcopal mansions and into a couple of rooms in a rectory or seminary."

Despite widespread speculation that he would be named a cardinal, it never happened. Then his successor, Archbishop Pio Laghi, who had appointed conservative bishops, was named a cardinal on May 29, 1991. That day, after lunch, Archbishop Jadot said to Dr. Dick, "It is a slap in my face."

Archbishop Jadot lived out the last days of his life in his native Brussels. He died there on January 21, 2009 at the age of 99.