

THE POPE INVITES CLOSE FRIENDS TO ASSISI

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The following news release comes to us courtesy of Domus Enterprises, which calls itself “an international news organization, staffed by lay Catholic journalists, dedicated to providing accurate world news, written from a distinctly Catholic perspective.”

High-ranking officials in any important organization—whether it be political, corporate, governmental, or religious—have a short list of close friends that they make sure they invite to special meetings.

To this, they then add other names and organizations which will be invited. The secondary list consists of representatives of organizations to which they have not had close ties over a period of time or which do not ordinarily attend their meetings—but should attend this one.

From time to time, the Vatican, one of the most headline-hungry organizations in the world, decides to convene an ecumenical gathering in Rome or Assisi. **The resultant assembly accomplishes little other than grabbing media headlines throughout the world for a few days. It is remarkable that the other denominations and world churches willingly cooperate in this magnifying of the papacy, yet they happily do so.**

Such meetings accomplish two objectives:

First, they demonstrate that the Vatican is still a world power, able to call together key representatives from various governments and denominations throughout the world. It is thus shown to be an international organization, with close ties to power brokers everywhere, able to convene meetings which no one else seems able.

Second, in rank, the Vatican is careful to stand a little above the other organizations attending those gatherings. Its leader sits in the middle of a row of a few topmost leaders and at the front of an assembly of hundreds of them. He is always the featured speaker. His organization makes all preparatory and session arrangements, scheduling, and press releases. By papal standards, all other organizations and religions are thus shown to be subservient to the man the Italians fondly refer to as *il papa*.

If you stop to consider the matter, what do other denominational headquarters normally do? They spend their time quietly tending to their own church affairs. **Not so with the Catholic Church; it is different. The little horn power is always anxious to speak great things and show the world it is very important. It is always at work, planning ways to express its pomposity.** The very word, “pontificate,” which comes from one of the names of the pope, is defined in the dictionary as “to speak or act with haughty, pompous self-importance or authority.” That is the description, etched in history, of the “horn that had eyes and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows” (*Daniel 7:20; cf. 7:8*).

In 1986, the Vatican appointed Cardinal Etchegaray to organize the first inter-religious meeting. Assisi, Italy, was selected as the location for the gathering; as the home of the founder of the Franciscans, it savored of historical Catholic significance.

As John Paul II's papacy draws to a close (due to his gradually weakening health), a second worldwide interfaith assembly at Assisi was scheduled

for Thursday, January 24.

In preparation for it, a short list of close associates and friends in important positions most likely to respond favorably was drawn up. Vatican leadership was so certain that they would attend that those few names were released in advance.

The longer list of Roman Catholic leaders included very many lesser, unnamed Catholic leaders from all over the world, including eight nations in which Rome is trying to obtain a stronger grip: Algeria, Angola, Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Sudan.

This short list of Catholic dignitaries included only five men, all of them cardinals:

- **Cardinal Angelo Sodano**, Vatican Secretary of State.
- **Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re**, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops.
- **Cardinal Francois-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan**, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.
- **Cardinal Walter Kasper**, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.
- **Cardinal Etchegaray**, the organizer of the 1986 Assisi conference.

The longer list of non-Catholic representatives to the gathering included representatives from many specific denominations, world religions, and secular governments throughout the world. Yet specific names were not given, for it was the offices that counted; the men filling them apparently did not have a close, ongoing, relationship to the Vatican. This longer list included:

Eleven Orthodox patriarchs, 50 Islamic leaders from seven nations, and Jewish rabbis from four nations. This long list also included representatives of Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and native African faiths (*i.e.*, witch doctors, etc.).

Next, we consider the short list of non-Catholic invitees. We want to pay close attention to these men and the offices they fill. All have, in the past, been key men in ongoing ecumenical contacts carried on by the Vatican. If you have any question about the fact, just consider who is included.

It is a striking fact that, aside from five Catholic cardinals, only eleven other men were specifically named. These were extremely important non-Catholic contacts that the Vatican has regularly worked with.

Here is the list of these 11 very special people:

- **Konrad Kaiser**, Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches.
- **Setri Nyomi**, an officer of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.
- **George Freeman**, an officer of the World Methodist Council.
- **Theodor Angelou**, an officer of the European Baptist Federation.
- **Elio Toaff**, former chief rabbi of the city of Rome,

Italy.

- **Richard Garrard**, Anglican Bishop of the city of Rome, Italy.
- **Cecil Robeck**, an officer of the Pentecostal Church.
- **Alvin Jackson**, an officer of the Disciples of Christ.
- **Bert Beverly Beach**, an officer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- **Carlo Azeglio Ciampi**, President of Italy.
- **Silvio Berlusconi**, Prime Minister of Italy.

Let us carefully consider the above list. The few very important persons specifically named is clearly of peculiar significance.

The Catholic news release specifically states that “an estimated 300 people,” “representing 44 different religious bodies,” were expected to attend this international ecumenical conference, hosted by the pope of Rome.

Yet, out of 300 people, only five Catholic cardinals, nine Protestant leaders, and two government leaders are specifically named.

Who are the five named Catholics?

- The *Vatican Secretary of State* is the second most influential individual in the Vatican. If you have read my book, *The Murder of Pope John Paul I*, you learned that, in my opinion, it was his secretary of state who murdered him.

- The *Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops* is the Vatican’s liaison with Catholic bishops throughout the world, including missionary districts where the hierarchy has not been established, a very important position indeed.

- The *President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace* works with non-Catholic organizations and governments throughout the world. Ostensibly organized by Pope Paul VI on January 6, 1967, to promote international social justice, aid underdeveloped nations, and seek ways of encouraging peace among all peoples,—the PCJP is actually used to increase Catholic influence and control in nations throughout the world.

- The President of the *Pontifical Council for Christian Unity* oversees all contacts with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, national ecumenical councils in every country on earth, and religious organizations worldwide. This is the ecumenical arm of the Vatican, and was established as a result of Vatican II in the mid-1960s. It is the PCCU’s connections with the WCC—and those of our General Conference with the WCC; both started in 1967—which have unfortunately linked us so closely together. It is as a result of such contacts that we gave the gold medal to Pope Paul VI in 1977.

- The organizer of this and the preceding (1986) ecumenical conference at Assisi—would, of course, be one of the few people specifically named.

Those are the only five men on the Vatican’s short list for this ecumenical gathering.

Next we turn our attention to the 11 non-Catholics which were specifically named:

- The **President and Prime Minister of Italy** would, of course, be named.

- Nine important religious leaders, each one representing a major segment of Christendom would, of course, be named. These nine would be expected to be key contact men between the other churches and Rome. Look over the list; it is significant:

- **The chief rabbi and Anglican bishop of the city of Rome**, both contact men between the Vatican, world Jewry, and the Anglican Church. You would expect that neither the Jews nor the British would want to work quietly with the Vatican through a representative in the city of Rome.

- Key ecumenical liaisons representing the four major, international, ecumenical church confederations: **The World Council of Churches, The World Alliance of Reformed [Calvinist, Presbyterian] Churches, The World Methodist Council, and The European Baptist Federation.**

In addition, three other men were mentioned. **Out of 300 delegates to the convention, why were these three singled out for special mention?**

They are obviously closely involved in ecumenical relations, on behalf of their denominations, with the Vatican. Can there be any other reason?

One might reply, “Yes, because those three had already accepted the invitation.” Not so, we know that Beach had not yet accepted.

The 16 men on the short list (five of whom were cardinals) were named because they ranked very high in maintaining Vatican relations with other churches and governments.

They were named because they had worked so closely with Rome in the past; it was fully expected that they would accept the invitation to attend, so their names were released in advance.

- The remaining three non-Catholics on the short list were: **Cecil Robeck**, a Pentecostal; **Alvin Jackson**, of the Disciples of Christ; and **Bert B. Beach**, an officer (recently retired) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Why was Beach named?

Simple enough: **He has been the Seventh-day Adventist Church contact man with the WCC and the Vatican for decades. Indeed, he has probably been a liaison with the WCC and Rome longer than any other man named on the entire list—Catholic, Protestant, or governmental!**

Who is Bert B. Beach? He is the son of Walter Beach, Secretary of the General Conference in 1950s, when I attended our Seminary and worked on the night crew at the General Conference. Bert Beach is a European who speaks several languages fluently and has been the General Conference representative to the WCC since 1967—the same year that Pope Paul VI appointed its first Vatican representative to the WCC.

Now you can understand why Bert Beach was our denomination’s representative in kneeling be-

fore the pope on May 18, 1977, and offering him a gold medallion on behalf the people and organization of Seventh-day Adventists.

He was in Rome that day as leader of the *World Confessional Families* (now called *Christian World Communions*), an interfaith organization of several Protestant denominations, organized by the WCC in 1968. How did he get appointed to that position? It came as a result of his year-after-year contacts with Protestant church leaders at WCC headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Ignore this talk that our church does not have a representative at the World Council of Churches! We have had one there for 35 years! Is he voting member? He most assuredly is. He is a voting member of the most important ecumenical and interfaith doctrinal committee of the WCC, representing a broad range of Protestant denominations (*The Faith and Order Commission*). On that committee has sat a Vatican representative since 1967, the same year that Beach came on board.

In fact, Beach has been the chairman of that WCC ecumenical committee for at least two decades!

Why was he so influential? First, he is at ease in so many European languages. Second, he has been on the committee longer than anyone else. Third, he is so friendly, that he sets all the newcomers at ease. He is an extremely congenial person. Fourth, he knows all the background of ecumenical activities of the committee and the WCC, going back further than anyone else. So it has been natural for the representatives to elect this friendly, austere, knowledgeable man of affairs, year after year, as committee chairman.

If you ask our church leaders about this, they will reply that the General Conference is not, and has never held membership in the World Council of Churches. Very true. Instead, the General Conference used two ruses to maintain its very close connections with the WCC.

First, our General Conference appointed Bert Beach as a voting “personal representative” to this key WCC interfaith Faith and Order Commission, especially set up for the purpose of cooperating with the Vatican II objective of sending representatives to the other churches and to the WCC, but not joining the WCC.

It is significant that, of all the denominations in Christendom, only two chose to send representatives without joining the WCC. Everyone else either joined it or stayed out of it entirely. Those two were the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They send “personal representatives.”

Why did the Catholic Church do that? It wanted to deepen its contacts and alliances with the other churches; but, because its doctrines taught that it was

the only true church of Christ, it did not want to lower itself to full membership in the WCC.

The Adventist Church followed the same route because it knew its members (most of whom were still conservative back then) would be extremely upset if it openly joined the WCC.

So both organizations used the device of joining a committee, giving them access to the WCC and other churches without accepting the problems which would result from, what the WCC calls, a “full membership.”

Second, our General Conference also appointed several Bible teachers at Andrews to the WCC, on a rotating basis, as additional “personal representatives.” This fiction was originally used by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the early 1940s, when he appointed Myron Taylor as ambassador to the Vatican. Roosevelt well-knew the American public would not tolerate a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, so he announced that Taylor was “a personal ambassador”—*i.e.*, representing himself!

One more detail: If Beach was expected to attend the ecumenical function, why did he not do so? He has attended similar gatherings at the WCC and Canterbury for years; why not this one? It was slated to be given too much publicity. According to Kermit Netteburg, General Conference spokesman, after carefully discussing the invitation, General Conference leadership decided that Beach had better not attend after all. One person on the Vatican’s short list of papal fawners had backed out. — *vf*

For a very large collection of historical and documentary evidence relating to this, see our *Seventh-day Adventist/Vatican Ecumenical Involvement* set of two books: *Book 1: History, 80 pp. (\$6.00 + \$2.50); Book 2: Documents, 146 pp. (\$11.00 + \$3.00).*

“The SDAC is regularly represented through observers or advisers at WCC and other church meetings. For many years, an SDA has been a member of the WCC Faith and Order Commission in a personal capacity. The SDAC has participated in dialogues with the WCC and various religious bodies and since 1968 has been represented at the conference of secretaries of Christian World Communions.

“More recently, the SDAC has been represented at the annual conference of U.S. church leaders. Christian World Communions and various churches have responded to the SDA invitation and sent observers to the quinquennial General Conference Sessions.”—*Article, “Seventh-day Adventist Church,” in Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, published by WCC Publications, Geneva, Switzerland, 1991, p. 919 [abbreviations theirs].*

Read *Great Controversy, 445:0-1, 592:2-3. An ecumenical coalition of the churches will bring on the National Sunday Law!*