

World and Nation

Woman holds mock mass to protest Catholic sexism

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — An American Roman Catholic nurse conducted a mock Mass in St. Peter's Basilica on Wednesday "to dramatize the plight of all women who want to become priests but cannot because of the church's discrimination."

A Vatican official called it an "act of stupidity" that "does not prove or enhance anything." He spoke on condition of anonymity.

Babi Burke of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., approached the Altar of the Throne of St. Peter in the rear apse with a lighted alcohol lamp and kissed the altar. She blessed herself with a sign of the cross, then spread her arms in a priestly gesture of welcome, slowly raised a wafer, consumed it and raised a silver chalice. "Oh, she is beautiful, just beauti-

ful!" shouted her colleague, Marie-Terese Sonmoy, a former nun from Belgium. "She is finally saying mass!" Sonmoy applauded as she watched Burke along with several other spectators, including four journalists.

When she entered St. Peter's, the largest church in Christendom, Burke was dressed in a flowing black dress embroidered with golden threads that resembled clerical garb, a knitted grayish skull cap and white shawl.

When she appeared in the apse, behind the modern bronze altar fashioned by American sculptor Albert Friscia, she had over her neck a long off-white stole of the type normally worn by priests when celebrating Mass. On the wall behind her was a bronze chair that tradition

holds belonged to St. Peter, considered by the church as the first pope.

On Saturday, the two women interrupted a Vatican news conference with a call on the church to end "all discrimination based on race, social class or sex."

Burke, who is 44 and has four children, drank from the chalice Wednesday and blessed the altar, then two Vatican guards rushed up and took her from the basilica to the Holy See's security headquarters.

Guards also took Sonmoy away. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro said both women were released later.

"I celebrated Mass to dramatize the plight of all women who want to become priests but cannot because of the church's discrimination," Burke said as she was escorted from the apse.

Joe Kennedy to campaign for JFK's old seat in Congress

Associated Press

BOSTON — Flashing a familiar smile, Joseph P. Kennedy II made his political debut Wednesday, declaring he will run for the seat in Congress once held by his uncle John so that he can "fight for the rights of ordinary people."

The 33-year-old son of the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy became an instant front-runner in a crowded field for the 8th District's Democratic primary next September.

The seat is now held by House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr., who is retiring after 17 terms.

"This is Joe Kennedy running for office . . . and no other member of my family. . . . I'd like to go to Washington, D.C., because I think we can use the government as a catalyst."

—Joseph P. Kennedy II

He stressed his own business experience for the past six years as founder and chairman of the non-profit Citizens Energy Corp., which provides low-cost fuel to the needy.

Backed by his wife, Sheila, Kennedy tried to head off questions about his decision to run in a district 20 miles from his home in Marshfield.

"My goodness, if there was ever a congressional race I would consider, it'd be the 8th," Kennedy said, reminding reporters that he was born at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in the Brighton section of Boston, which is in the district.

He also went to school in the district, married his wife, had his son baptized and founded Citizens Energy there.

In addition, Kennedy said he had recently bought a house in Brighton.

His name, wealth and experience make Kennedy the candidate to beat in the campaign to represent one of the most liberal districts in the country, say political analysts.

The primary field also includes James Roosevelt of Cambridge, a lawyer and Democratic party official who is a grandson of another famous Democratic president — Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Other Democrats facing Kennedy are state Sen. George Bachrach; state Reps. Thomas Gallagher, Thomas Valley and William Galvin; lawyer Vincent McCarthy; anti-nuclear activist Carla Johnston, and former Boston mayoral candidate Melvin King.

Anticipating Kennedy's decision, Galvin issued a challenge to all the candidates Tuesday asking them to limit spending to \$500,000 per candidate.

"It sounded like a very reasonable idea," Kennedy said. "If all the other candidates went along with it, I would have no problem."

But Valley has rejected the proposal on the grounds that candidates who are not as well known as Kennedy must try to outspend him.

NASA administrator takes leave of absence

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — James M. Beggs, praised by President Reagan for having "revitalized" the nation's space program, took a leave of absence from his NASA administrator's job Wednesday to defend himself against criminal charges of fraud.

A White House statement said Beggs, who has held the top post at the space agency for more than four years, had requested that Reagan relieve him of his duties until the charges are disposed of. On Tuesday, in a clear signal, Reagan's spokesman, Larry Speakes, said Beggs "will do the right and proper thing."

Beggs also received generous praise from the president.

"I don't know of anyone who could have done a finer job than he has done and is doing at NASA," said Reagan, at a news conference called to announce the resignation of another top government official, Robert McFarlane, the national security adviser.

The No. 2 man at the agency, Dr. William R. Graham, assumed his duties as deputy administrator only last week. He has no prior NASA experience, having served for three years as chairman of Reagan's general advisory committee on arms control and disarmament.

Beggs, who had been executive vice president and a director of General Dynamics Corp in St. Louis before taking the NASA post, was indicted with three other present or

former officers of the firm in connection with events alleged to have happened between Jan. 1, 1978, and Aug. 1, 1981.

Beggs took over at NASA on July 10, 1981.

The defendants, including the corporation itself, are charged with illegally billing the government for cost overruns on a prototype of the Sgt. York anti-aircraft gun.

Beggs has said he expects to be exonerated. General Dynamics, which was suspended from obtaining any new government contracts until the legal matters are cleared, said the individuals "were honest in their judgments and acted in complete good faith" and that the accusations involved sophisticated accounting matters.

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