

Catalan Christian organisation slams Vatican's "slap in the face"

The Vatican chooses a member of Opus Dei to be the new archbishop

The organisation Església Plural has called the decision to divide up the diocese of Barcelona and to nominate Jaume Pujol Balcells - a member of Opus Dei who teaches at the university of Navarra - as the new archbishop of Tarragona "an unprecedented slap in the face" for the Catalan church, which "has not received such a vicious attack since the days of the dictatorship".

This broad-based Christian organisation goes on to call the Vatican's decision to split the diocese of Barcelona into three a "complete lack of sensitivity verging on contempt for local churches, priests and parishioners". The spokesperson went on to say: "The last thing we needed right now is to start breaking up the diocese without first dealing with existing problems and planning for the future, after due consultation with Martínez Sistiach."

Meanwhile in Terrassa, which is to be the centre of one of the new dioceses, Josep Pauses, the rector of the Basílica del Santo Espíritu de Terrassa has declared that he is "unhappy and not at all in agreement" with the news that the diocese is to be split into three, "Not only because of the decision in itself, but also because of the way in which it was made, without any consideration of the opinions of the different



Martínez Sistiach, the new archbishop of Barcelona

governmental organisations, such as the episcopal and pastoral councils".

The rector went on to say that the creation of a new diocese in Terrassa had been received with "decidedly mixed feelings" by the local parishes, as although they were pleased that Terrassa would once

more be a diocese (which it was from the 5th to the 7th centuries), the problem was that now they would be hindered by a "lack of personnel and infrastructure", since "nowadays there are not many seminarists any more".

When interviewed in Pamplona, Jaume Pujol Balcells, professor

of theology at the University of Navarra, was decidedly upbeat about his appointment: "I am returning to Catalonia, from which I have never separated myself, as it is where my family and my cultural and Christian roots are. I have a great desire to learn from everyone and to serve".



Future university students are gearing up for their final examination

More than 24,000 students in Catalonia are now taking the *selectivitat*, a standardised university entrance exam. However traumatic the experience, around 80 per cent pass the test. The pressure drops when a student begins to consider the how much weight the exam carries in determin-

ing his or her future. Access into certain university degrees is rather difficult, as some require marks above an 8. In other countries, such as the US where standardised tests have long been in place, the idea of the single exam as the superior qualifier of a student's capacity is being re-ex-

amined. Some private universities have already eliminated the SATs from their acceptance criteria. While education was an issue in the last general elections, until the debate on the exams is taken seriously at an official level, young people will have to continue to suffer through them.

TERROR TRIAL

Judge requests trial date

Judge Baltasar Garzon, the investigating magistrate in the case involving Al Qaeda activity in Spain, has concluded the investigative phase of the proceeding against Osama bin Laden and other alleged Al Qaeda terrorists and suggested that a date be set for their trial in Madrid.

In a ruling issued Tuesday, Garzon ordered that the case's extensive files be sent to the Spanish High Court known as the Audiencia Nacional in preparation for the trial of Bin Laden and 40 others.

Garzon claimed in his brief that the suspects used Spain as a base to prepare the September 11 attacks in the United States.

LANGUAGE LEARNING

Spanish, Catalan students up

The number of foreigners learning Spanish and Catalan has exceeded the expectations of Barcelona Town Hall.

More than 3000 students have taken part in basic courses in both languages, which is provided by the City Council's service for immigrants, foreigners and refugees. Their popularity has seen an increase in the number of courses that take place each month.

DRUG TESTING

Catalan police test for drugs

The Autonomous Police Force of Catalonia (Mossos d'Esquadra) will soon begin carrying out tests for drug consumption on drivers involved in accidents or who engage in reckless driving.

The Catalan Ministry of Interior is buying the testing equipment from an American company. Each test of a driver will cost 40 euros.

The agency plans to use the system on a trial basis for several months before deciding whether to incorporate it permanently.

The tests can detect cannabis, cocaine, heroin and amphetamines.

The test can be administered by non-medical personnel and provides results in less than five minutes.

POPULATION STUDIES

San Cugat youngest city

San Cugat is the youngest municipality in the Spanish state, according to figures published recently by the Caixa Foundation.

A study compares statistical and socioeconomical information for each of the 3,171 municipalities in the Spanish state with more than 1,000 inhabitants.

In San Cugat, there are 16.2 children born for every 1,000 inhabitants giving it the highest birth rate of any municipality in the study.

According to city statistics, 10% of the population is 6 years old or younger.