

Jean Jadot: Paul's Man in Washington

This weekend I am happy to announce that my biography of Archbishop Jean Jadot has been published.

Archbishop Jean Jadot (1909–2009) was a Belgian bishop and Apostolic Delegate to the United States from 23 May 1973 to 27 June 1980. His episcopal appointments were far different from those of his predecessor, Luigi Raimondi (1967–1973) or his successor, Pio Laghi (1980–1984).

The Jadot bishops, at the request of Pope Paul VI, were less big-business-type managers and more pastorally-oriented leaders with a generally open-minded and contemporary approach to Catholic life. Like Jadot, the Second Vatican Council was their inspiration. Jadot In his seven years as apostolic delegate, was responsible for the appointments of 103 new bishops and the assignments of 15 archbishops.

The bishops appointed upon Jadot's recommendation were quickly known as the "Jadot boys." They were also quickly denounced by conservative US Catholics, after the 1976 Call to Action gathering in Detroit. After his address to the US bishops in Washington on 9 November 1976, in which Jadot told the bishops what their reform agenda should be for the sake of the church in the United States, Jadot became the target of bitter animosity from conservative bishops and laypeople. A close friend in Rome warned him at that time that "they" would now be "out to get him."

Over the years the image of Jean Jadot has been distorted by some "progressives" as well as some "conservatives." (All one has to do is Google "Jean Jadot.") The first group often saw the Archbishop as a very liberal, progressive theologian. The second group saw him as an irresponsible modernist archbishop, who gave the United States its "problem bishops." The truth of course, is in the middle. Archbishop Jadot was not a far-out liberal theologian, but an open-minded and pastorally-oriented Apostolic Delegate, who was keenly aware that a changing world needed creative church leaders alert to the "signs of the times."

That some of the Jadot bishops ended up being less-than-exemplary bishops greatly pained Archbishop Jadot. On more than one occasion, he remarked that an apostolic delegate tries to research, consult, and come up with those whom he considers the best candidates for episcopal ordination and appointment, but no apostolic delegate is infallible

Over a period of several years, with notebook and tape recorder in hand, I asked Archbishop Jadot questions, and he talked and offered candid observations. In the course of a friendship that lasted close to thirty years, Archbishop Jadot gave me access to documentation, correspondence, his diaries, photos, etc. I became his archivist as well, especially for documentation pertaining to his years in the United States. He was a wonderfully wise, warm, and supportive friend.

Pope Paul VI held Archbishop Jadot in very high regard. Sentiments about Jadot at the Vatican, changed significantly, however, with the election of Pope John Paul II. In 1980, a physically worn-out Jadot offered his resignation to John Paul II. It was happily accepted. Jadot was called to Rome, where he worked in obvious papal disfavor for four years, as President of

the Secretariat for Non-Christians (renamed “Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue” by Pope John Paul II in 1988.) During lunch with Archbishop Jadot one day in 1989, I asked him what it was like working at the Vatican after his seven years in the United States. He chuckled and then very seriously said: “I was given every courtesy but never any friendship.”

Unlike his predecessors and his successor, Archbishop Jadot was never named a cardinal. I vividly remember being with him, the day the announcement came out that his successor, Archbishop Pio Laghi, was being named a cardinal. Jadot had called me that morning and asked if he could drive over to Leuven for lunch with his friends at The American College. At the time I had not yet heard the news, but learned what had happened while he was on his way from Brussels. We met and had a delightful lunch. No one said anything about Laghi. After lunch, I walked him back to his car. Just before he opened the door, he turned to me: “Did you hear the news?” “Yes,” I said, “just after your phone call this morning.” “Well,” Jadot said, “I had to be with my US American friends today. It is not important to be a cardinal. What bothers me is that I know this is not about being a cardinal. It is a papal slap in my face.”

The last lengthy conversation I had with Archbishop Jadot was a couple years before his death. We shared critical observations about some not-so-positive developments in the church. Then he paused, looked at me, and said: “It is winter now, but spring will return.”

Although I had great affection and personal regard for Jean Jadot, I hope readers will find this book a well-documented and objective look at a man who had a major impact, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, on the Catholic Church in the United States. The focus of *Jean Jadot: Paul’s Man in Washington*, therefore, is the man Jean Jadot: his character, vision, and pastoral ministry. The book is not hagiography but history.

Writing this announcement about my book, I can’t help thinking about one of Archbishop Jadot’s successors: Carlo Maria Viganò, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States from 19 October 2011 to 12 April 2016. So very different from Jean Jadot, Apostolic Nuncio Viganò was not just a far-right conservative but a toxic trouble-maker. As Apostolic Nuncio he engaged in a massive personal coverup of sexual abuse by US bishops, was hostile to Pope Francis, and worked very hard to discredit and demean him. I am glad Archbishop Jadot did not have to witness all of this.

Today’s post is not a sales pitch but an update about a very important personal project. Archbishop Jadot had asked me to write this biography. The project took a bit longer than anticipated. The Archbishop had asked that publication not happen until after his own death and that of a few upper-level hierarchical personalities. Then came some unexpected publication twists and turns along the way. I am so very happy it is finally in print. If someone is interested in a copy of my book *Jean Jadot: Paul’s Man in Washington*, it can be found on Amazon.com for a very reasonable price. It is available in paperback for \$15 and as an ebook for \$7. For people in Europe it is also available via Amazon.fr.

Jean Jadot was a wonderfully kind and wise bishop; and, yes, Jean Jadot was a wonderfully wise, warm, and supportive friend. – John Alonzo Dick

JEAN JADOT



Paul's Man in Washington

John Alonzo Dick

