# Bay Staters surprised at choice of Pope

By John Yang
Globe Correspondent

Area clergy and lay people reacted to the election of Pope John Paul I with joy, surprise and hope yesterday.

"The announcement is strange in two ways," said Rev. Peter Polo as he prepared to celebrate afternoon Mass at Sacred Heart Church at 12 North Square in the North End. "It is strange because of the quickness of the vote and that he was not widely mentioned before the conclave began," he said.

Fr. Polo, a native of Venice, added: "Naturally I'm pleased it is a Venetian."

Fr. Polo told his congregation of about 150 of the selection after reading yesterday's Gospel — a selection from Matthew telling of Jesus Christ's selection of Peter as the first Pope. Applause and the ringing of the church's bells greeted the announcement.

Few in Boston know much about the man known until yesterday as Albino Cardinal Luciani, Patriarch of Venice.

One who knows him personally is John Cardinal Wright of Baltimore. A Boston native, Cardinal Wright was released yesterday morning from Tufts-New England Medical Center where he was recovering from an eye operation that prevented him from attending the conclave.

Reached at the residence of Humberto Cardinal Medeiros in Brighton where he is staying, Cardinal Wright called the new Pope "a man of unusual interests who should prove to be an unusual Pope."

"The election of Cardinal Luciani, now Pope John Paul I, is a stroke of good fortune for the intellectual life, urbanity and for simplicity of soul," he continued in a prepared statement.

"In this century, Venice has already given the church a canonized saint, Pope Pius X, and a popular personality, Pope John XXIII. In the new Pope it has given us a witty Supreme Pontiff who delights in combining love of literature with love of the word of God."

The Most Rev. Thomas V. Daily, auxiliary bishop and vicar general of the Archdiocese of Boston, admitted he knew nothing about Pope John Paul I. "I really don't know what direction this will take us in."

Although unfamiliar with the new Pontiff, many expressed the hope that his leadership would modernize the church.

Fr. Polo said he would like to see Pope John Paul I change some of the church laws dealing with marriage and its relationship with other churches. He declined to elaborate.

"I hope he plans to carry out the progressive changes of Vatican II," said Ed Nugent of West Newton as he came out of the Franciscan Missionary Union at 100 Arch st., downtown.

"I hope he liberalizes the church. It has been losing people," said 17-year-old Dolores Savignano of Watertown who attended afternoon Mass at St. Leonard's Church on Price street in the North End.

Rev. Dr. James Nash of Burlington, executive director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, said:

"I am delighted with his choice of name — combining the virtues of both Pope John and Pope Paul. It is very, very significant. We will have to wait to see what that significance is, but I am very hopeful."