

Bishop Pelotte released from hospital

GALLUP, N.M. – Bishop Donald E. Pelotte of Gallup has been released from a Houston hospital that specializes in traumatic brain injuries and is continuing his recuperation in Florida, said a diocesan official.

Deacon Timoteo Lujan, chancellor of the Gallup Diocese, said the bishop was discharged from Memorial Hermann/The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research in Houston during the weekend of Aug. 25-26 but would not disclose where he is recuperating in Florida. He cited the need for the bishop to be able to recover in private from the wounds he sustained in a fall at his residence during the weekend of July 21-22.

As for his future as bishop of Gallup, Deacon Lujan said it is still too early in the complex process to decide when, or if, the bishop will return.

According to an Aug. 27 news release, the diocesan college of consultors met Aug. 23 to discuss the care of the bishop and the needs of the diocese in his absence. The consultors, with Father James E. Walker, vicar general, as their head, have assumed the administrative responsibility of the diocese in the absence of the bishop.

Deacon Lujan said that because of privacy laws doctors will not give diocesan officials specific information on the bishop's progress. There are indications that he is responding to treatment but will be in need of ongoing care for some time, he said.

Canon law calls on the college of consultors to meet regularly to keep abreast of the needs of the diocese during the absence of a bishop. Information will be provided as it becomes available.

"The bishop is making acceptable progress but the consultors have no set time frame to make a decision whether or not the bishop needs to be replaced," said Deacon Lujan. "This is a very gray area."

However, after a recent visit with Bishop Pelotte before his discharge, Deacon Lujan said the bishop is expected to be absent from the diocese and unable to carry out his pastoral duties for an indefinite period of time.

Bishop Pelotte, 62, has been hospitalized since July 23 with extensive injuries including head trauma and severe bruises to a shoulder and his arms, legs, hands and knuckles.

Deacon Lujan went to the bishop's home when he missed appointments and found Bishop Pelotte in his bedroom, severely injured. The bishop told Deacon Lujan he had fallen down the stairs.