

'PIETA' UNVEILED IN GLOW OF BLUE

Papal Blessing Given at Fair —Plastic Shield Stirrs a Debate Over Setting

By ROBERT ALDEN

Michelangelo's "Pietà" was unveiled yesterday in an elaborate ceremony in the Vatican Pavilion at the World's Fair.

Paul Cardinal Marella, legate of Pope Paul VI, presided at the ceremony, assisted by Cardinal Spellman and 43 archbishops and bishops.

Mayor Wagner, Senator Kenneth B. Keating, Lieut. Gov. Malcolm Wilson, Sargent Shriver, director of the Peace Corps, and many other representatives from church and public life participated.

The ceremony was actually a lighting of the "Pietà," rather than an unveiling. Because of technical complications, it was decided not to drape the masterpiece.

Applause, Then Silence

Instead, after a blessing from the Pope was read, the Michelangelo depiction of the frail dead body of Christ cradled in His grieving mother's arms, was slowly lighted.

There was a smattering of applause as the "Pietà" came into view. But those who applauded soon recognized that applause was inappropriate, and they quickly stopped.

The white marble masterpiece is set in a niche with flickering blue lights about it. The setting was designed by Jo Mielziner, Broadway stage designer.

It was apparent almost immediately that the setting might prove controversial. Many comments were made—some laudatory, some critical. The most pointed criticisms were directed at the transparent plastic shield that had been placed before the sculpture to protect it.

Others found the flickering

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blue lights distracting. Following the unveiling, the church dignitaries in their colorful garb circled the pavilion in a procession. Cardinal Marella carried his golden shepherd's staff, or crozier. He was accompanied by a ceremonial armed guard. Knights of Malta also were in the procession, along with archbishops and bishops from 11 Eastern states.

On re-entering the pavilion, Cardinal Marella intoned the prayers of blessing. Cardinal Spellman and Egidio Vagnozzi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, also participated in the ceremony.

A mass was celebrated afterward by Cardinal Marella in the pavilion's chapel on the second floor.

Preaching the sermon, Bishop Bryan J. McEntegart of Brooklyn said:

"More than two full years have been spent in planning and preparation that we of the church might, to the very best advantage, let our light shine before men."

Moses Gives View

After the mass, the church officials were addressed by Robert Moses, president of the fair, at a gathering at the fair's Terrace Club.

"As the Unisphere symbolizes the world of industry," Mr. Moses said, "so the 'Pieta' and the other exhibits from the Holy See represent the world of the spirit."

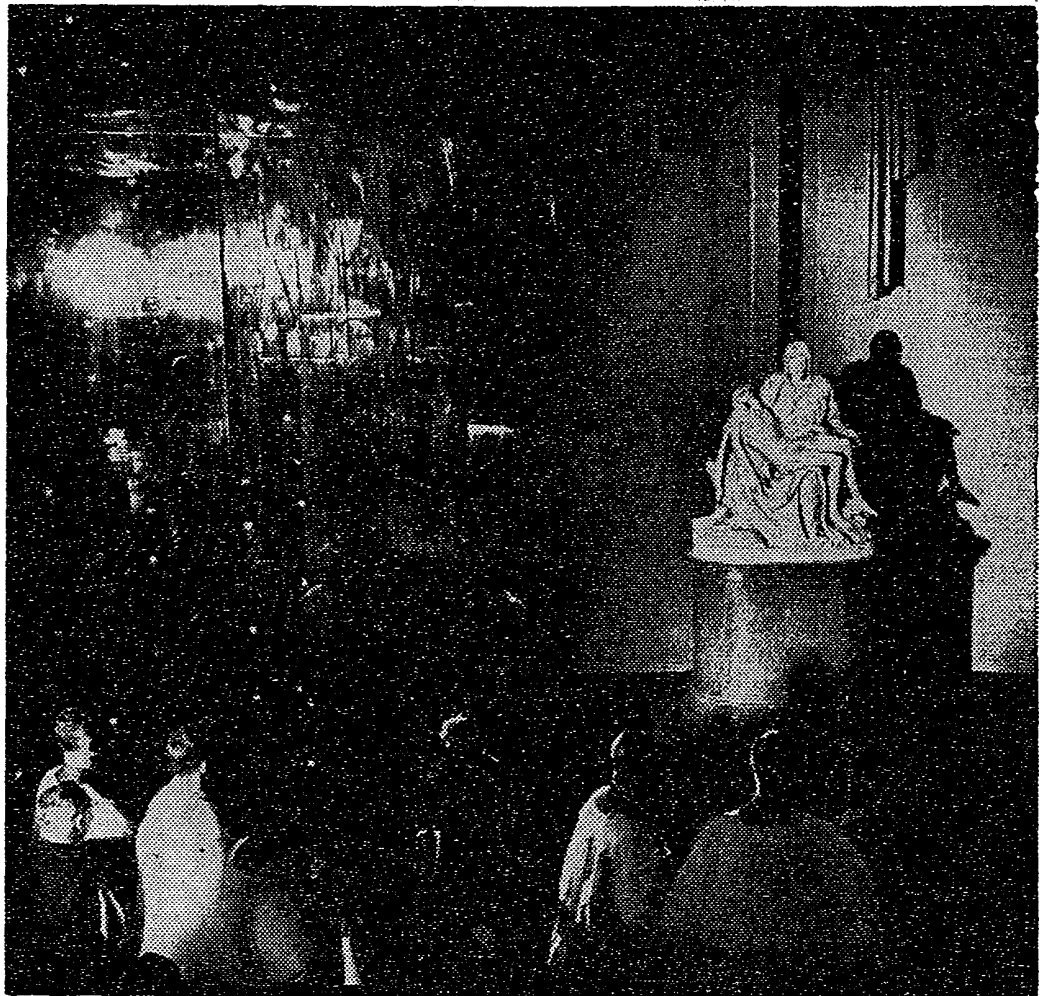
Mr. Moses took direct issue with those who had objected to the Michelangelo work being taken from its pedestal in St.

Peter's in Rome because of the dangers involved.

"A World's Fair," he said, "is peculiarly dependent on the loan and shipment under proper precautions of precious objects from abroad.

"Art pundits who had hardly been aware of the existence of the 'Pieta' became its self-appointed guardians and had the effrontery to instruct the authorities of the church as to their responsibilities to mankind.

"Throughout the fair in all of our trials the critics have kept up their incessant yapping. Critics build nothing."



SHIELD PROTECTS 'PIETA': Lights reflecting on transparent shield, left, erected to protect Michelangelo work. Ceremonial illumination was held yesterday at the Fair.

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