

Mary's Pope

*"In the discord, God struck
a great clarion call.
To a Slavonic Pope,
he offered the throne."* (Julius Slowacki)

The great clarion is ringing. Its death knell resounds, echoing throughout the world. All is accomplished for the man it mourns. John Paul II the Great has been laid to rest in the crypt; all we now see is the wood of the coffin; but we still see on it the great "M" of Mary.

This man was no longer of this earth. This extraordinary man, still unbelievable a short time ago, has passed among us. The greatness of his genius astounded; the power of his faith could make of the earth a smaller place. I met this man, not personally, but on one of those days when his voice, proclaiming the truth, could be heard by all of us on this little earth, by all of us young people from the whole world who had travelled to see this old man under such a hot sun which burned us both with heat and with his courage. And we were so proud. All the flags were waving in the wind, and it was snatching away all the languages, you remember? His voice, exhausted by suffering, was still able to say the right words to us, words which spoke of the love of others. Of others who did not, perhaps, speak the same language as we did, who did not pray like us perhaps or who did not think like us. He had under-

stood; he loved us so much.

He took the burden of an intolerant world upon his shoulders. The man, once so strong, bore in his flesh all the marks of annihilation.

At the end of the way of the cross, the athlete no longer walked. His straight back was now bent under the weight. The clear, resounding voice had now become a sort of painful grating, broken by the difficult breathing of a survivor. The nimbleness of the mountain climber had given way to the frailness of a trembling man, of a man who could no longer control the muscles of his face, once so beautiful, but now tortured.

This man was a dying man for so long, so very long, for he felt life ebbing away from him. This man shattered the cult of "self" against the walls of humility and that is why so many could not understand anything. That is why the vain declared that it was disgusting, that it bothered them or that it was a masquerade. That is why the proud advised him to retire or resign. However, Pope John Paul II was already no longer there; there was only the suffering Christ, still and forever, for the world and for his Church.

John Paul II the Great, John Paul II the Greatest! For this marvelous Pope was necessary. He had to be the guardian and worthy of Christ Himself, so that the Mother might prepare the victory of the Son... and he knew it. He knew this and it was obvious in his coat of arms. Mary was at work somewhere in this world over

which he travelled more than twenty times. He knew that he had to hold on for a little while longer for her, that he had to offer himself as a rampart against which all the cannonballs could strike during the time it took the troops to form through her and behind him. And now, all is accomplished, the rampart falls, and the hour has come.

I will tell you something. You know, I wrote my first article, "*Watchman of the Morning*", on the Pope. It was upon returning from the World Youth Days in Toronto in 2002. I repeat it, his eyes had shaken me. From the giant screen upon which we watched him say the Sunday Mass with difficulty, his gaze had pierced me through and through. I still remember the terrible wind that blew over all of us during that Mass, a powerful, chilling wind, almost incomprehensible for us who, on the preceding day, were suffocating from an overpowering heat without the slightest breeze. Was it the breath of the Holy Spirit? I don't really know, but I had to bear witness, I had to speak to you of this gaze and repeat to you what he had told us.

A few years have passed, some articles, as well as other moments, sometimes quite difficult, as has certainly been the case for all of you. Then came this terrible day, still so close, when he left us. It was a day of intense happiness for me; this day was to mark my life in a very special way, for it was the day of my wedding. I was to unite my destiny to that of the

woman I love. We knew he was very sick and the atmosphere that day reflected well that of the world. The ceremony took place very simply, as did the banquet. When everything was over, when we were getting ready to leave, it was announced that the Pope had just died. Then there was a confused mixture of feelings within us: we burned with an intense happiness while at the same time being broken by sorrow.

Then, I understood that I had not made a mistake, that this day was really going to mark my life, our life, forever. I understood that he would watch over us; I understood

the meaning of a hundredfold reward... for the very little that I had been able to offer him. Mary's Pope was no longer, the great Pope had left us, he imposed himself on us as our patron...

Yes, the Pope of Mary has passed, but he kept the world for Her, preserving it from destruction so that She might still be able to convert it, regardless of the cost, and give it back to the Son in her capacity of Lady of All Peoples, to Him who is the Lord of All Peoples.

He passed like a dazzling sun, his light guiding all peoples. He ascended to his zenith; the last day saw his light and then

began the long twilight. And now, here comes the night and I think again of the words of this man who was asking me to stay and watch, who had asked me to be the watchman of the morning... and I cried because I saw the day fall, and even heaven wept. I thought that the new sun of the next morning could still be far off and that all there remained for me to do, now, was to watch and pray.

Long live His Holiness
Pope John Paul II!
Long live John Paul II the Great!
Thank you, Karol Wojtyla!

Martin Vaillancourt