

# His Holiness Pope John Paul II, Mary's Pope, Has Entered Life

Pope John Paul II left this world at 9:37 p.m. on April 2, 2005, during the first hours of the feast of Divine Mercy which he instituted to indicate to all the way to God's Heart.<sup>1</sup> The Church is mourning a great Pope, and not only the Church, but all of humanity.

God had granted him extraordinary gifts which he humbly placed at the service of all throughout an exceptionally rich and fruitful life.

Pope John Paul II leaves behind the memory of a man deeply immersed in God – that was the characteristic that was most striking to those whom met him and it was doubtlessly the secret of the fascination he held –, as well as the profound attachment he had for the Mother of God, to whom he entrusted humanity many times.

He was a man of peace, the most credible ambassador of peace on our planet, even among the Heads of State who liked to meet him. He is one of the greatest Popes in the history of the Church. Raoul Auclair had named him: "John Paul II the Great" in the dedication of the book *L'Homme Total* which he offered him in 1985. Cardinal Marty who was the Archbishop of Paris at the time called him "the Athlete of God" and the title stuck.

He will also go down in history as being the Pope of dialogue. Although he had been invested with the highest spiritual authority, yet, he was the one who could humbly listen to every man, woman or child, and more particularly, to the poor, the oppressed, the sick. The Father of all, in fact; in him, the title of "Holy Father" took on all its meaning. Alain Vircondelet, one of his biographers, described him as the "Pope of closeness", a beautiful expression which recalls the close contacts he was able to establish with everyone, no matter what their origins, race or religion were.

We will also remember him as the defender of human rights, the defender of life, of all life, from the time of conception to death. He was

the voice of all those who could not make themselves heard. He gave the impetus for the collapse of the Communist regime which had held Eastern Europe under an iron yoke. Shortly after his election, he challenged this regime by declaring: "*Church of silence, pass through my voice.*"

He is also the Pope with all the records:

- He has crisscrossed the planet to bring to it the message of Jesus Christ: 104 apostolic voyages which led him to 129 countries, and 146 pastoral visits in Italy – a total of 1,163,865 km, that is, more than 28 times around the world and 3 times the distance between the earth and the moon.
- He drew the largest crowds ever seen in contemporary history: up to 4 million people (the Philippines, 1995); during the World Youth Days in Toronto, on Sunday, July 28, 2002, 800,000 people had travelled to come and see him (the largest gathering ever held in Canada); close to 18 million pilgrims have participated in Wednesday's General Audiences.
- He beatified 1,338 servants and handmaids of God and canonized 482.
- He leaves behind writings which will serve as a beacon for generations to come. During his pontificate, he published 14 encyclicals, 15 apostolic exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions, 45 apostolic letters, 30 *motu proprio*, hundreds of letters and messages, 5 books, the last one of which, *Memory and Identity*, was presented as "his spiritual and political testament".
- During his 26 years of pontificate (the third longest in history after the Apostle Peter and Pope Pius IX), he held nine consistories during which he created 232 cardinals.
- He won the hearts of the young people of the entire world like no other leader has ever done, even though

he proposed an exacting moral to them by calling upon them to surpass themselves in order to follow Christ.

The secret of such fruitfulness? A life chiseled by trials and tribulations, molded by the struggle against "the ideologies of evil" (Nazism and Communism) which, far from crushing this elite soul, led it to the heights of love. In fact, in *Memory and Identity*, the Pope declares: "*All this evil is present in the world partly so as to awaken our love, our self-gift in generous and disinterested service to those visited by suffering.*" (p. 168)

## AN EXCEPTIONAL DESTINY

Born on May 18, 1920 at Wadowice, south of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla passed through the test of trials and detachments at a very young age. He was nine years old when his mother died; four years later, his only brother, a doctor, was carried off by illness. And Poland had been occupied for over a year by the Nazis when he lost his father in February 1941. "Lolek", as he was affectionately nicknamed, was now without any family.

Endowed with an exceptional intelligence, a sociable and dynamic personality, sports-minded, compassionate and generous, Karol was also quite different from his companions because of his contemplative nature and a rich spiritual life. An example of his generosity: on a very cold day, he met a poor man on the street who did not have a coat, so he took his off and gave it to him. From his very early years, he attended Mass every day. However, before his father's death, he was not thinking of entering the priesthood but of a career in the theater, for he had a real talent for acting. He was interested in philosophy; at the Jagellon University, he followed courses in philology (the study of the Polish language); and he wrote poetry.

Under the Nazi occupation, he pursued his studies in philology in secret, participated in the resistance. He risked his life by participating

in plays, helped Jewish families to escape from the ghettos and provided them with false papers. To avoid being deported himself to a work camp in Germany, he found work in a quarry not far from Krakow, and then he worked in the Solvay plant. As soon as this was possible at his workplace, he would absorb himself in the reading of Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort's *True Devotion to Mary*, a reading which deeply marked him.

He began to attend in secret the Seminary of Krakow in the fall of 1942. In 1944, he miraculously escaped death twice.

– On the night of February 29, as he was returning home from the plant, he was hit by a German military truck. A woman passing by prevented the other vehicles from running over the unconscious young man and hailed a German officer, who had him taken to a hospital where Karol remained for twelve days.

– Then came the "Black Sunday" of August 1944. Fearing an uprising, the Germans arrested all the men between 15 and 50 years of age; however, having entered the building where Karol lived, they forgot to search his apartment where he was prostrate on the floor in prayer.

In January 1945, the Russians "liberated" Krakow and Karol completed his theology at the Jagellon University. He was ordained a priest on November 1, 1946. Cardinal Sapieha then sent him to Rome to further his studies and he obtained a doctorate in theology under the direction of Father Garrigou-Lagrange, on April 30, 1948. His thesis was entitled: "The Doctrine of Faith of Saint John of the Cross".

When he returned home, once again there was bloodshed in Poland, for Stalin was trying to sovietize the country with an iron hand. The Catholic Church became the defender of national identity, and Father Karol Wojtyla played an increasingly im-



portant role in this battle against the Communist regime, the authorities not having realized quickly enough the threat it represented for the party.

He had an extraordinary influence over young people with whom he organized excursions. He published a first book of poetry, studied philosophy and prepared a doctoral thesis on Max Scheler, one of the fathers of phenomenology. He taught at the Grand Seminary of Krakow and then at the Catholic University of Lublin.

In 1956, in memory of his work as a laborer at the quarry during the Nazi occupation, Father Karol Wojtyla wrote a poem in which is to be found the famous sentence of his pontificate:

*"Do not be afraid! Human things have distant shores. They cannot be contained for long in a channel that is too narrow."*<sup>2</sup>

In 1958, at 38 years of age, Karol Wojtyla was appointed the Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow and he chose as his motto, *"Totus Tuus"*. He became an archbishop in 1964 and three years later, a cardinal.

Simultaneously, he looked after his pastoral responsibilities and maintained an intense literary and intellectual activity. He became known because of his interventions at the Council and during post-conciliar synods; he was a member of several Roman congregations. He distinguished himself at the congresses of philosophy and theology. In 1974, he was the dominant figure at the International Thomist Congress in Rome, to the point where Josef Pieper of Muenster described the event as being "the Congress of the Cardinal from Krakow", and where this play on words circulated among those participating in the Congress: "It is a truly a phenomenon, a Cardinal phenomenologist!"

#### THE POPE FROM AFAR

On October 16, 1978, seventeen days after the death of Pope John Paul I, the Conclave elected the first non-Italian pope in 455 years: Cardinal Karol Wojtyla who took the name of John Paul II in honor of his predecessors and who presented himself before the crowd as coming from "a faraway land, but always close through the com-

munion of faith and its Christian tradition".

It was not long before he would upset the protocol and certain customs; at the very least, the very choice of his coat of arms would cause surprise by the addition (without any regard for heraldic rules) of his motto and a monogram, the letter "M" under one arm of the cross, representing Mary to whom he had dedicated his entire life, as his motto, which he took from Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, indicates.

On October 22, during the inaugural Mass of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II addressed the world: *"Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid of welcoming Christ and accepting his power!... Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ. To his saving power, open the boundaries of States, the economic and political systems, the immense areas of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid! Christ knows 'what is in the heart of man' and He alone knows it!"*

Leaving the responsibility of governing the affairs of the Church up to the Curia to a certain extent, Pope John Paul II went on the road to proclaim the Gospel, following the example of Saint Paul, the Apostle of the nations. His extraordinary charisma conquered the crowds.

But on May 13, 1981, the world stared in horror: the Pope was the victim of an attempt on his life in Saint Peter's Square. In the epilogue of *Memory and Identity*, Pope John Paul II and his secretary, Archbishop Dziwisz recount the event. Archbishop Dziwisz declares: *"Agca shot to kill. That shot should have been fatal. The bullet passed through the Holy Father's body, wounding him in the stomach, the right elbow, and the left index finger. Then the bullet fell between the Pope and me."*

As for Pope John Paul II, he states being convinced that *"'someone' was guiding and deflecting that bullet"*. Five months later, when he took up again his meetings with the faithful in Saint Peter's Square, he declared: *"Again, I have become indebted to the Blessed Virgin.... Could I forget that the event in Saint Peter's Square took place on the day and at*

*the hour when the first appearance of the Mother of Christ to the poor little peasants has been remembered for over sixty years at Fatima in Portugal? For, in everything that happened to me on that day, I felt that extraordinary motherly protection and care, which turned out to be stronger than the deadly bullet."* (*Memory and Identity*, epilogue)

In 1982, the Pope went to Fatima to thank Mary, and the bullet that hit him was given to the Fatima Shrine where it was inserted in Our Lady's crown.

#### THE REALIZATIONS

One of the great realizations of his pontificate was the bringing together of the Catholic Church with Christians from other religious denominations and with non-Christians. Assisi, the city of Saint Francis, will henceforth be associated with the days of prayer he held there with representatives from all the religions in the world in 1986 and 2002, giving as a watchword: *"Not to pray together, but to be together to pray"*. There was no question of "syncretism" or of a merging of beliefs, but rather, it was a matter of showing that mutual respect and constructive dialogue were possible between people with different beliefs. The "spirit of Assisi" was intended to pave the way to peace, for, as the Pope indicated, *"there will be peace only when we will all have understood that we are one big family"*.

Always with regard to this bringing together of religions, let us recall that Pope John Paul II was the first Pope to visit a Synagogue (Rome, 1986), a Mosque (Damascus, 2001), that he established links with several Orthodox Churches and with Reform Churches, without however succeeding in rebuilding the bridges with the Orthodox Church in Moscow.

The Jubilee of the Year 2000 was also an outstanding moment of his pontificate, punctuated as it was by the requests for pardon he made on behalf of the Church for its errors of the past. The text of the request for forgiveness concerning the sins committed against the Jewish people was placed by the Pope in the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem during the Jubilee Pilgrimage he made to the Holy Land in March 2000.

Of all the voyages undertaken by the Pope, the pilgrimage to the Holy Land was perhaps the one that promised to be a source of greater pitfalls or opposition, and on the contrary, it brought about a rare unanimity. Observers spoke of a victory; the Heads of State of an "historical voyage"; the believers of the three great monotheistic religions of the Holy Land – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – of reconciliation.

One cannot think of this pontificate without mentioning the World Youth Day, a celebration which annually brought young people to gather about the Holy Father. Inaugurated in 1986 in Rome on Palm Sunday, the World Youth Day would be repeated at that time every year, except for the seven years when it would be celebrated outside Italy: Buenos Aires (Argentina, 1987), Saint James of Compostello (Spain, 1989), Czestochowa (Poland, 1991), Denver (Colorado, U.S.A., 1993), Manilla (Philippines, 1995), Paris (France, 1997), and Toronto (Canada, 2002).

John Paul II merited the title of "Young People's Pope". They were fascinated by this man who spoke to them and who loved them as no one else did. All over the world, they welcomed him with an extraordinary enthusiasm, chanting his name in chorus: "Giovanni Paolo" clamored the young Italians as they clapped their hands; "John Paul II, we love you" (acclamation which shook the stadium in Denver); "Juan Pablo II, te quiero todo el mundo", etc.

On the political scene, besides having inspired the collapse of the Communist regime, he contributed to the resolution of conflicts, vigorously imposing himself on Heads of State who were visibly subjugated by his charisma. Under his reign, the number of countries maintaining diplomatic relations with the Holy See rose from 85 to 174. He had an influence in the broadening of the European Union so that it would be open to countries in Eastern Europe. Finally, he often advocated a greater solidarity between men and between peoples, condemned a capitalism gone wild and denounced the failings of globalization.

There is one point upon



which he constantly insisted throughout his pontificate, that is, the culture of life as opposed to the culture of death. The Pope was for life, as Christ was, and he condemned abortion, euthanasia, the policies endangering the family such as homosexual marriages. Some have reproached him with having a conservative view concerning the individual. Questioned on this matter by Claudine Bourbonnais on the morning show of April 2 on the RDI television network, Jean Offredo, a friend of the Pope and his editor, declared that there was "a great misunderstanding" with regard to Pope John Paul II's thinking:

"What does modernism and what does conservatism mean? Because if modernism means that any evolution of society, no matter what it is, is in the line of progress and in the line of the liberating of the human conscience and the human body, and therefore that the Church would be behind the times if it did not follow this modernism, I ask that one nevertheless pay some attention. Is euthanasia a human progress? Is embryo research, if it is not linked to mercantilism, necessarily a human progress? Thus, we can multiply a certain number of other such examples where I would say: 'Be careful!', for what may seem to be modernism is perhaps a terrible regression.

"So the same thing can be said for conservatism. If defending a certain number of values, notably on the right to life, [etc.], means that this is conservatism, we must be careful!"

We cannot reproach the Pope for having defended life, without compromise, based on the program he had set for himself:

*"I have hoped and prayed for a great renewal of faith among Christians. I have wished to encourage believers and all people of good will to defend life, to promote respect for the dignity of every human being, to safeguard the family against so many present-day threats, to open their hearts to the world's poor and exploited, and to work for an international order built on respect for the rule of law and on solidarity with the less fortunate."* (Malta, May 9, 2001)

To the sick and the handi-

capped, he reminded them of their dignity as sons and daughters of God. And during the last ten years of his life, he became one of them, not hesitating to show the entire world his physical limitations which were always increasingly noticeable, as illness caused him to be more and more stooped and rendered his elocution more difficult.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II'S WAY OF THE CROSS

In a world that has a cult for beauty and youthfulness, where looks are an obsession, the Pope dared to propose the values of the being and he won his wager. The vast majority of young people and people of all ages and walks of life were not put off by his aspect of suffering; rather, they were impressed by his tremendous courage, his will to always go beyond his strength, without paying particular attention to his body. We remember his arrival in Toronto when, through an act of will and although he was clearly suffering, he insisted upon coming down the stairs from the plane on his own instead of using the hydraulic elevator lift which had been installed for him away from curious looks.

To the very end, he remained exposed for all peoples to see, even during his last illness, that calvary which lasted two months. It has been said in reference to him that he was travelling his way of the cross and rightly so. And if some were shocked to see him so diminished, considering such pictures to be intolerable, it is nonetheless true that this state configured him even more closely to Christ, the man of sorrows described by Isaiah:

*"Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes;... a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering, a man to make people screen their faces; he was despised and we took no account of him. And yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried."* (Is 53:2-4)

Even though he could not speak to them, he insisted upon appearing before the faithful to bless them, both at the Gemelli Hospital where he was hospitalized in February and March and at the Vatican. On March 27, Easter

Sunday, it was heartrending to see him bless the crowd from his apartment window looking out onto Saint Peter's Square and to try in vain to give the blessing *urbi et orbi* (to Rome and to the world). Wednesday, March 30 was his last public appearance; once again he stood at his apartment window and tried in vain to speak, his face distorted with pain.

The next day, Thursday, his condition worsened abruptly. On Friday, April 1, the Vatican announced that his state of health was very serious and that he had received the Sacrament of the Sick. The Pope, in all serenity, was fighting his last battle... Millions of people throughout the world accompanied him with their prayers, not only Catholics and Christians from other religious confessions, but also Jews, Muslims, aided in this by the television networks of the entire world – including the two major Arab networks, Al Jazira and Al Arabyia – which transmitted almost continuously pictures of the Vatican where the windows in the Pope's apartment remained lit, and to which the eyes of the entire world were as though glued and under which tens of thousands of people kept watch.

Late Friday night, when the Pope was informed that many people, especially young people, were praying for him in Saint Peter's Square, those with him were able to grasp these words which seemed to them to be addressed to young people. *"I went to you and now you have come to me. I thank you."*

On Saturday, April 2, at 8:00 p.m., in Pope John Paul II's room, began the Mass of Divine Mercy celebrated by Archbishop Dziwisz. The Pope received Communion and the Sacrament of the Sick for the second time, while more than 60,000 people prayed for him under his window. He died peacefully at 9:37 p.m. A citizen of the world, he no longer had any family members to pray at his bedside but he was surrounded by the prayers and love of the immense family of the people of God whom he had wanted to hold tightly in his arms throughout his entire pontificate.

#### THE PLANET MOURNS

Hardly had the news of his

death become known that religious and political authorities the world over began underlining the importance of this Pope who left a very deep mark on the international scene for a little more than a quarter century.

- The American President George W. Bush: "The Catholic Church has lost its shepherd and the world a champion of freedom."
- The German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder: "Pope John Paul II has written history; through his action and his influence, he has changed the world."
- The former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev: "He was the top humanist on this planet... He was able to accomplish a lot not only for Catholics, but also for the whole world."
- The Philippine President, Gloria Arroyo: "The world has lost a great spiritual bridge between all nations."
- The Patriarch of Constantinople referred to him as a "visionary" who worked at bringing together the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

In Canada, Prime Minister Paul Martin underlined that the Pope was a "true apostle of peace", while the former Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, declared: "I think he will always be thought of as 'John Paul the Great'."

As soon as the Pope's death was announced, flags were placed at half mast throughout the world, in Ottawa, and on all government offices in Quebec. The papal flag was raised on the mast of the central tower of the National Assembly in Quebec, where it could be seen fluttering in the wind next to the Quebec flag. Several countries decreed days of national mourning: nine days in Poland, seven in Brazil and the Philippines, five in Paraguay, four in Costa Rica, three in Italy, Portugal, Chile, Bolivia, Cuba, Lebanon, India, Egypt, etc.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Quebec and Primate of the Church in Canada, was very moved during the press conference he held minutes after the announcement of the Pope's death. "The feeling that dominates in me," he declared, "is gratitude. Gratitude to God who gave such a witness of Christian faith and such a fa-



ther full of wisdom and compassion to the Church and to humanity. Gratitude to the Polish people who so well prepared and accompanied this son of predilection belonging to a nation marked by the mystery of the cross. Gratitude to him especially, Karol Wojtyla become John Paul II, the man, the believer and the spiritual leader, who spent himself to the very end with such inspiration and passion in the service of the Lord, of His Church and of all his brethren. A man who fought all his life for human rights and for the dignity of every human being."

#### FINAL MESSAGE

On Sunday, April 3, after the Mass of Divine Mercy celebrated in Saint Peter's Square, Archbishop Sandri read the text which had been prepared for the Regina Caeli, upon the explicit indications of the Pope and which will remain his final message:

"... To humanity, which at times seems to be lost and dominated by the power of evil, egoism and fear, the risen Lord offers as a gift his love that forgives, reconciles and reopens the spirit to hope. It is love that converts hearts and gives peace. How much need the world has to understand and accept Divine Mercy!

"Lord, who with your Death and Resurrection reveal the love of the Father, we believe in you and with confidence repeat to you today: 'Jesus, I trust in you, have mercy on us and on the whole world.'..."

From April 3 to Friday, April 8, the day of the Pope's funeral, the city of Rome was literally besieged by more than 3 million people who joined with the Romans to pay a final tribute to the Pope whose mortal remains were exposed in Saint Peter's Basilica.

#### POPE JOHN PAUL II'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

On Thursday, April 6, Pope John Paul II's last will and testament was made public: some fifteen manuscript pages or five typewritten pages, written not all at the same time, but on the occasion of six Lenten retreats preached at the Vatican between 1979 and 2000. Here are some excerpts from it:

"I thank all. I ask all for forgiveness. I also ask for

prayer, so that God's Mercy will show itself greater than my weakness and unworthiness.

"During the Spiritual Exercises I reread the testament of the Holy Father Paul VI. This reading has led me to write the present testament... My personal notes should be burned... In regard to the funeral, I repeat the same dispositions which were given by the Holy Father Paul VI [here he notes in the margin: grave in the earth, not in a sarcophagus, 13.3.92.]" (March 6, 1979)

"Everyone should have present the prospect of death, and must be ready to present himself before the Lord and Judge – and, contemporaneously, Redeemer and Father. I also take this into consideration continually, entrusting that decisive moment to the Mother of Christ and of the Church – to the Mother of my hope....

"'Totus Tuus' through the Immaculate in life and in death. I hope that Christ... will render [my death] useful also for this most important cause which I seek to serve: the salvation of men, the safeguarding of the human family, and in it of all the nations and peoples..." (March 1, 1980)

"When on the day of October 16, 1978, the conclave of Cardinals elected John Paul II, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński said to me: 'The task of the new Pope will be to lead the Church into the Third Millennium.'... 'Victory, when it occurs, will be a victory through Mary' – these words of his Predecessor, Card. August Hlond, the Primate of the Millennium used to repeat.

"I wish once again to express my gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the great gift of Vatican Council II... As a Bishop who has participated in the conciliar event from the first to the last day, I wish to entrust this great treasure to all those who are or will be in the future called to realize it. For my part, I thank the eternal Pastor who allowed me to serve this great cause in the course of all the years of my pontificate.

"How can I not willingly embrace all the Episcopates of the world... How can I not also remember so many Christian Brothers – not Catholics! And the Rabbi of Rome and the numerous representatives of non-

Christian religions! And the many representatives of the world of culture, science, politics, the means of social communications!

"In the measure that the end of my earthly life approaches I return to the memory of the beginning, of my parents... [the Holy Father recalls the memory of all those he came in contact with in Poland, in Rome]... to persons who in a special way were entrusted to me by the Lord.

"To all I wish to say one thing: 'May God reward you.'

"'In manus Tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.'" (March 17, 2000)" (Zenit ZE050407)

#### A PLANETARY FUNERAL

Even at his funeral, Pope John Paul II will have fostered reconciliation between principal actors on the political scene and representatives of religions of the world who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square to pay their last respects to him.

– Ten kings and queens and 76 Heads of State and of governments who had come to honor the Man of Peace also had to engage in a diplomatic exercise at the same time, depending on circumstances. Quite remarked was the handshake exchanged by the President of Israel with the Presidents of Syria and Iran, between the American President and the French President. The noted absences: China (no doubt motivated by the presence of the President of Taiwan) and Russia.

– Some twenty Patriarchs from Orthodox Churches joined the 157 Catholic Cardinals, including the Patriarch of Constantinople, a representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and the Patriarch of Greece. Along with the representatives from other Christian Churches, among them the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of the Anglican Church, there were 18 personalities from worldwide Judaism, and 20 from Islam, as well as 7 Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus.

The event was covered by more than 6,000 journalists and 90 television stations. It was estimated that 800 million people followed the Mass televised live to the five continents. More than one

million people had travelled to attend the ceremony: 500,000 in Saint Peter's Square and the Via della Conciliazione (facing the Basilica) and 600,000 in the city squares, the Colosseum, as well as the university campus of Tor Vergata and Maxime Circus. (In all twenty-five giant screens had been set up.) The ceremony was also re-transmitted on a giant screen in the squares of all the major cities of Italy and in the park in Krakow where 800,000 Polish people had gathered.

The funeral Mass was presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. On the Pope's cypress coffin, placed before the altar, a large book containing the Gospels had been laid open. With the wind gusts sweeping through Saint Peter's Square, the pages were seen to turn rapidly and then the book closed, as though to mark the end of a life in the service of the Gospel.

The crowd present "canonized" Pope John Paul II, so to speak, by chanting several times during the Mass, these words which had also been written on banners: "Santo subito!" (Saint immediately!). At the end of the Mass, the Holy Father was honored by a long ovation of seven minutes during which the faithful chanted "Santo!" and finally, the cry of young Italian people: "Giovanni Paolo!"

Pope John Paul II's coffin was placed in the crypt below Saint Peter's Basilica in the Saint Longinus Oratory, directly in the ground, at the very place where Blessed John XXIII lay before his remains were brought into the Basilica after his beatification in September 2000.

Astonishment and gratitude will unite all peoples when we will be able to understand the signs accomplished by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, Mary's Pope, whose tremendous influence made the heart of the planet beat.

April 9, 2005

#### Sylvie Payeur-Raynauld

1. In the Church, the celebration of important liturgical feasts begins at night on the eve of the feast with the office of Vespers.
2. Quoted by Bernard Lecomte in his biography of the Pope, *Jean-Paul II*, published by Éditions Gallimard in 2003, p. 65.

