

VALE POPE JOHN PAUL II - 1920-2005 – An Ecumenical Tribute to Pope John Paul II –

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“ Well done, good and faithful servant.....”

..... These may well have been the words in which Jesus greeted his loyal and faithful Vicar, Karol Wojtyła, who was to become known as John Paul II, on the Saturday evening of 2 April 2005 after one of the most momentous Pontificates in the history of the Church. Millions of young people throughout the world have never known another Pope. He came from a humble beginning and retained that inner humility throughout his long life. The international outpouring of sorrow, of loss and grief on the death of Pope John Paul is unprecedented of past Pontificates and is testimony of the feelings of people throughout the world who have lost a father, a leader and a man of great stature irrespective of their creed and beliefs.

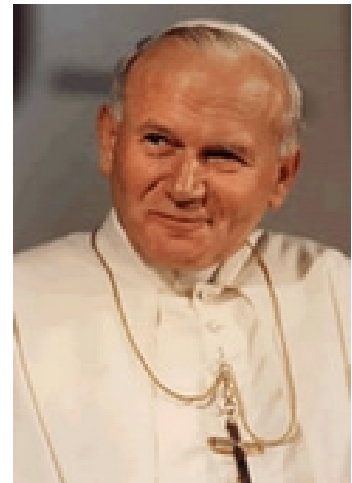
History will pass its judgment on the life and Pontificate of Pope John Paul II. We judge him now in our own time. He was essentially a man of great compassion and kindness. He understood the strong points of human nature and also human weaknesses and he was a priest who could always forgive. He bore no grudges and never showed vindictiveness towards those who opposed him.



With a smile on his warm Polish face...

Moreover John Paul II was a spontaneous person, as a priest, a bishop and Pope he had a charming charismatic personality, usually with a smile on his warm Polish face. Even in latter years suffering from physical effects of sickness, he retained his sense of humour and gave incredible encouragement to the sick and the needy. His appearance sometimes showed a tired and sick old man slumped in his chair; but those who had occasion to converse with him in private found an altogether different man, keen, alert and questioning.

Above all John Paul was a holy man, a real man of God. Each day his life began with meditation and prayer and concluded in the like manner. His working day was built around prayer and he always conscious of the weight of the Master's Cross on his shoulders in steering the boat of Peter on earth. It was not an insurmountable burden for Jesus reassures us: take my yoke and learn from me, my yoke is easy and my burden light.



John Paul was recognised as a great communicator, a philosopher, a theologian, a writer and poet. His writings are voluminous and will be read and studied for many years to come. It will be then that the wisdom and insight of this great man will be fully realised.

It is as a great humanitarian that, in the early years of his Pontificate, he was personally interested in the charitable works of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem. It was in August of 1984 that Pope John Paul received in a private audience at his summer villa at Castel Gandolfo the President of the Lazarus Hilfswerk, Klaus-Peter Pokolm, who reported to

the Holy Father on the progress of the continuing aid for Poland and the Hospital for Children in Wadowice after LHW had assisted on an urgent request of the Archbishop in Cracow providing medical assistance for Polish pilgrims during his visit.



In 1987 Pope John Paul invited a delegation of Lazarus Hilfswerk integrated into our Order as a supranational Jurisdiction under patronage of the Grandmaster the Humanitarian Grand Priory Europe together with Lazarus chaplains to concelebrate Mass in his private chapel in the presence of His Eminence **Franciszek Cardinal Macharski. Arch-bishop of Kraków {Cracow}**. **Bishop Dr. Augustinus Frotz** representing Cardinal Joseph Höffner of Cologne, President of the German Bishops Episcopal Conference. Afterwards he thanked in presence of the German Ambassador to the Vatican each of the invited Lazarus Volunteers with personal words and blessed the charitabled work of Lazarus.

During his visit to Hungary where Lazarus Hilfswerk took care of about totally 350 handicapped wheelchair-bound pilgrims, Pope John Paul recognised the presence of the Order and spontaneously went over to them and gave each an individual blessing causing the organisers some worry as it was not anticipated that he would deviate from the schedule! These pilgrims were filled with joy as they had never previously been outside their country, let alone expecting a personal encounter with their Holy Father.

Subsequently he sent to the President of the Lazarus Hilfswerk Klaus-Peter Pokolm a personal message which encouraged LHW to continue their work in Eastern countries for the Holy Father namely in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia and Russia.

Jesus in referring to the Baptist asked them: "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Likewise John Paul was a man of principle and great courage. He did not flinch or evade the challenges of the those who wanted to see so called "change" to the principles of the Church in order to suit their current life styles and whims. John Paul was mindful of the exhortation of Paul in his Second Letter to Timothy in Chapter 4: 1-5 on the importance of unchanging principles. This faithful adherence to the principles of the Church and the Word of God did not always endear him to many, however he was respected for his constancy and guidance in his leadership.



The hour has come and the night is with us and once again we might reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul:

*as for me, I am already being poured out in sacrifice,
and the time of my deliverance is at hand.
I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the course.
I have kept the faith.*

**Well done good and faithful servant,
rest in the peace of the LORD.**

By **Monsignor Anthony K. Toms, JChLJ, OMLJ**
*Jurisdictional Chaplain Australia in order of the
Public Relations Commission Member ICPO*

*Throughout this Vale I have often used the word great. It is my hope that the Church may one day bestow the title of Great to the name of **Pope John Paul II**.*



An Ecumenical Tribute to Pope John Paul II



The year was 1992 – the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. The international meetings of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem were in Rome. All the members of the Order look forward to these international meetings and especially so with the hope of an audience with the Holy Father during our visit to the Eternal City.

Unfortunately, and this illustrates the Holy Father's ability to transcend bureaucratic protocol, we were told that an audience would not be likely because we were not a Roman Catholic Order. Evidently, through some of our Polish friends and members of the Order, the Papal household discovered we were in Rome and then fortunately, I received a phone call from the **Pope's private secretary, Msgr. Stanislaw Dziwisz**, asking me to write up a short statement of the extraordinary ecumenical works of the Order in bringing relief to Eastern Europe and especially to Poland. Within a few hours, we received an invitation to gather at the great bronze doors the following day at noon. There, at the entrance to the Vatican on St. Peter's Square, we would enter into the papal palace for a private audience with the Holy Father.

Naturally, we were very delighted and pleasantly surprised. We crowded in at the appointed hour passing security. We were led by two of the papal chamberlains and masters of ceremonies to one of the smaller audience halls. There, in great expectation and gratitude, we awaited the arrival of the Holy Father. Soon, he arrived in his splendid white cassock and charming smile. He began to greet us all individually. Msgr. Dziwisz brought the Holy Father over to our Grand Prior, Dr. Hans von Leden, and myself.

After a few moments of greetings, Msgr. Dziwisz directed me to take the Holy Father around to introduce him to various members of the Order. It was an exhilarating half hour or so in which Pope John Paul II showed his uncommon interest in each individual person. He took a few minutes to chat with each of us and to give a gift of the rosary.

When he finished his greetings, he spoke a few words of gratitude of the ecumenical work of the Order of St. Lazarus in Eastern Europe and Poland and the special place that ecumenism plays in the building up of the Body of Christ. As he prepared to leave, in his jocular and informal way, said, "I am so glad that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492! Because, if he had not, you would not be able to come all the way from America to visit me on the occasion of this 400th Anniversary of the discovery of America. Thanks for coming." And he then disappeared as quickly as he had arrived.

Spiritual Reflection

On the occasion of the Holy Father's death, I am sure so many other groups who had the pleasure of meeting him over the years have similar stories to tell illustrating his willingness to greet all and to consolidate our common belief in Jesus Christ. But it is most interesting to reflect that, as he said from the very beginning of his Pontificate, he was not going to be "a prisoner of the Vatican," and he would reach out to the world to embrace it and to bring it to Christ through the intercession of Mary, His mother. For this reason, he chose the motto *Totus Tuis* to reflect his great devotion to Mary who, like himself, was charged with the apostolic role of bringing Christ to others. Our little episode is a concrete example of his apostolic mission in action reaching out to all who came to him.

Some years later, asked why so many people seem to love him so dearly, especially among the young, he could candidly and honestly say the real reason was because of the Holy Spirit's love attracting them to him through his apostolic mission

As you may recall, when the edition on Papal Orders of Knighthood was published by our own fellow member, Chev. Peter Bander van Duren, Peter remarked at one of our national meetings that the Holy Father had himself personally instructed him to include the Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem in recognition of our outstanding contributions to the ecumenical development and work of the Order throughout the world and especially in Eastern Europe, Poland and the former Soviet Union. He never missed a beat and was always grateful!



Pope John Paul II's ecumenical instincts were always to unite people in Christ. Let us pray that his ecumenical legacy may be the inspiration for true unity and to restore all things in Christ. May our Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem continue to be an instrument of that mission for Christian unity.

The members of the Order of St. Lazarus and the readers are kindly invited to read the [message of the GRANDMASTER of the Order of St. Lazarus](#) of 4th April 2005 - (use Acrobat Reader 7.0)

By Very Rev. Val A. McInnes, O.P., Ph.D., EGCLJ

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