

Pope John Paul II

May 18, 1920 - April 2, 2005

The Archdiocese of Winnipeg remembers the Holy Father



At St. Mary's Cathedral, September 16, 1984

“Jesus died to gather all the scattered people of God. This is the faith vision of who we are. That is the mission of the church and it is clearly the mission John Paul gave himself; to gather together all God’s people. He had a passionate desire for the unity of the church and the fact that we are called to love one another and be a sign of unity. Each one of us is challenged to make our lives an act of gathering rather than scattering and dividing. Pope John Paul II has set the bar high for his disciples.”

- Archbishop James Weisgerber at the Memorial Mass for Pope John Paul II at St. Mary's Cathedral, April 7, 2005.

Angelus

St. Mary's Cathedral

September 16, 1984



A moment of reflection at St. Mary's Cathedral

During his visit to Winnipeg in 1984, Pope John Paul II prayed the Angelus at St. Mary's Cathedral. Following are his words on that occasion:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At this midday hour, we gather in the Cathedral of Saint Mary to pray the Angelus together. The Lord invites us to pause for a moment and, in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints, to ponder the mystery of the Redemption and to lift our voices in praise of the Most Holy Trinity. It is a joy to be with you here in Winnipeg, and especially to join in prayer with the local Catholic community. I greet you all in the peace and love of Christ, and I extend cordial greetings to all the beloved people of this city of the Province of Manitoba.

In the Gospel of this Twenty-fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Peter asks Jesus the question: “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven” (Mt 18.21-22).

“Seventy times seven”: with this reply the Lord wants to make it clear to Peter and to us that we should set no limit to our forgiveness of others. Just as the Lord is always ready to forgive us, so we must always be ready to forgive one another. And how great is the need for forgiveness and reconciliation in our world today - indeed in our communities and families, in our very own hearts! That is why the special Sacrament of the Church for forgiveness, the Sacrament of Penance, is such a precious gift from the Lord.

In the Sacrament of Penance, God ex-

tends his forgiveness to us in a very personal way. Through the ministry of the priest, we come to our loving Saviour with the burden of our sins. We confess that we have sinned against God and our neighbour. We manifest our sorrow and ask for pardon from the Lord. Then, through the priest, we hear Christ say to us: “Your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2.5); “Go, and do not sin again” (Jn 8.11). Can we not also hear him say to us as we are filled with his saving grace: “Extend to others, seventy times seven, this same forgiveness and mercy”?

This is the work of the Church in every age - it is the duty of each one of us - “to profess and proclaim God’s mercy in all its truth” (*Dives in Misericordia*, 13), to extend to whomever we meet each day the same unlimited forgiveness that we have received from Christ. We practise mercy, too, when we “bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience” (Eph 4.2). And God’s mercy is also shown by generous and untiring service, like that required in offering health care for the sick or in carrying out medical research with persevering dedication.

On this day of the Lord when we celebrate the fullest expression of God’s abundant mercy - the Cross and Resurrection of Christ - let us praise our God who is rich in mercy. And, in imitation of his great love, let us forgive anyone who may have hurt us in any way. With the Blessed Mother of God, we proclaim the mercy of God which extends from generation to generation.

Visit to Winnipeg, September 1984



“Remember, O Canada, that the greatest richness of your multicultural character is to be able to reach out and help others – your brothers and sisters in need. This is what makes faith possible; this is what love requires. In the name of love, I urge that the openness shown to so many immigrants and refugees of ethnic minorities, and the generous reception given to them, should continue to characterize and enrich Canada in the future as in the past.”

- Pope John Paul II,
From his homily on September 16, 1984 at the
Mass at Bird's Hill Park



“Truly he was a man of God and from God.”

In the summer of 1983, it was confirmed that Pope John Paul II would be making a cross Canada tour, coast-to-coast, and Winnipeg would be one of the cities to be visited. Each place the Holy Father would visit was to have an organizing committee to plan the event in cooperation with officials from the Vatican, the federal, provincial and municipal governments and the Canadian Conference of Bishops. The visit to Winnipeg became a visit to the three Churches, the Ukrainian Archeparchy, and the Archdioceses of St. Boniface and Winnipeg. To facilitate these visits, the three archbishops appointed a “troika”, or three priests, to lead the organizing committees. Msgr. Roland Belanger from St. Boniface, Msgr. Michael Buyachok from the Ukrainian Archeparchy and myself were the co-coordinators for this event.

It was a long preparation time – a whole year – with lots of excitement along the way, but finally we arrived at the welcoming moment: 9 a.m. on Sunday September 16, 1984. The dignitaries and the three Archbishops were all on the tarmac beside the red carpet when the plane flying the Papal flag landed. We had to keep the Pope on a very tight schedule as he arrived from Toronto at 9 a.m. and was to leave for Edmonton by 5 p.m. We had invited a group of families from the Canadian Armed Forces to cheer the Pope when he got off the plane, but to make sure he didn't stray from the red carpet, we had the cars in the cavalcade drawn up bumper to bumper. After greeting the special guests, the Pope simply walked around the cars and headed over to the families who had been placed a good half block away! That experience con-

tinued through the day at the Ukrainian Cathedral, at St. Mary's Cathedral, and at Bird's Hill Park. He wanted to be with the people – to touch them, hug them, hold their hands, talk to them. He was truly the People's Pope! We just couldn't keep him on track, no matter what we did.

A little boy escaped under a barrier and dashed across the street when the Pope left St. Mary's Cathedral. A policeman picked him up and lifted him back over the barrier and the Pope went right over to the little boy, picked him up, kissed his forehead and gave him back to his father.

After the visit to Canada was over, the coordinators of the visit in the various cities were invited to fly back with the Pope on his plane. The three of us from the Winnipeg visit were on that plane. After a wonderful meal, the Holy Father came to us and spent several minutes talking to each one of us personally. It was an experience I will never forget – his hand on my shoulder as he spoke with me, looking into my eyes and talking as if we had been friends for a long while. At one point, when he asked me where I was from, I told him, Winnipeg, and he laughed and said, “Oh, Winnipeg, windy! And all those Archbishops!”

I will remember much from my several experiences of meeting him, but what I treasure the most was his personal touch, his real interest in me and the joy and peace he brought with him when we met. Truly he was a man of God and from God.

- Msgr. D. Ward Jamieson



With Msgr. Jamieson on the plane after the Canadian visit

John Paul II, We Love You

John Paul II believed, with all his heart and soul, in the limitless capabilities of the human spirit; that in each of us lies the inherent ability to rise in the image and likeness of God, becoming a true model of Christ in a troubled world. As if inspired by the Holy Spirit, the pages of the gospel book atop his coffin flipped forward and backward in the wind on the day of his funeral, representing all of humanity united in reflection upon the turning of the pages and final closure of his extraordinary life. And there was John Paul II in all his enigmatic complexity – a life worthy of dignity, majesty and glory, yet he lay in a humble cross-imbued cypress coffin at the end of his pilgrimage. In the midst of all the ceremonious rituals of the Catholic Church, tradition was broken like never before as the youth-infused crowd chanted one final love song for their dearly beloved friend.

This moment was utterly reminiscent of the loving affection expressed between millions of the world's young people and their Papa during World Youth Days in decades past. As we bid a final goodbye to his earthly body, the legacy of spirit that he has left will indelibly be marked in our hearts for a generation to come.

Thank you God for the gift of life of this Polish warrior poet, this truly brilliant visionary, this charismatic beacon of compassion, this beautiful light in the midst of great darkness, this most exceptional human spirit who, to his very death, was a bastion of hope who reminded us of the utter sacredness of life in all its forms. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. Go in peace, dear Papa. We love you.

- Raegen Walley



Pope John Paul II's love for young people was apparent as thousands gathered at World Youth Day in Toronto to see him

A memory of World Youth Day Toronto, 2002

World Youth Day 2002 was fast approaching. Louis and I and our five children were travelling to Ontario as part of our summer holidays. We were looking forward to being in Toronto during the World Youth Day festivities. There was definitely excitement in the air as we approached Toronto on the Thursday evening. We were listening to the local radio stations announcing the Pope's near arrival. All the commentators spoke with such anticipation in their voices when they announced that the Papal helicopter was flying over Toronto. Sure enough, we looked up and there were a number of helicopters in the air, all escorting the one carrying our Pope!

Our hearts beat with excitement. It was starting! Our Pope was here!

In the day to follow we toured around Toronto and stood in awe as we witnessed many young people gathered together in various groups singing, playing guitars and dancing in huge circles. What joy and hope we saw unfold before our eyes and heard from every radio and television commentator. Indeed a miracle!

On the Saturday of the Pope's stay in Toronto we were given a wonderful gift from God. How we all have loved and followed John Paul's teachings for years. I could not have guessed that the Lord would lead us to stand but six feet away from him. The friends we were staying with had invited us out to swim at the grandparents' house that afternoon. We finished our swim then drove back up to Richmond Hill, which is just north of Toronto. We got near their home when we wondered what was happening at the convent grounds where the Pope was staying. Since we were just seven or eight minutes away, we turned around and headed back. As we approached the street where the convent was (which was actually attached to the girls' high school I had attended back in the late seventies), we noticed people hanging around the iron fence of the grounds. The helicopter was on the grounds with various important looking vehicles and policemen standing around. We parked our cars then walked up to the fence and were told by some of the people there that the Pope had come out the day before and would probably come again. We were thrilled. We joined the small crowd and secured a place for our children right up against the fence. Louis got out his guitar and began playing upbeat praise music. Many times he replayed that old standard: 'This is the Day'.

Sure enough, about an hour and a half to two hours later, the Pope emerged from the doors of the convent and got into a golf cart. What a thrill to see him actually coming along the long driveway. We were all praying “Dear Lord, please bring him to the fence!” Suddenly he motioned to the driver to go past the helicopter and up to the fence. A cry of joy went up from all of us! He was coming! He was coming! And sure enough, he came! Our children stretched out their arms toward the Pope as he was slowly driven alongside the fence. Louis and I were singing, dancing, clapping our hands, laughing and waving. Then the cart stopped right in front of us. We were standing beside a girl in a wheel chair. He motioned to the helper to give her a rosary. Then he looked over at us and his gaze rested on us for a few seconds. Though we did not touch him with our hands, we touched him with our hearts. We connected. Our love and thanksgiving went out to him and his love came to us. Our friend then scooped up his 2 year old son in his arms and slid him through the iron rails of the fence. “Give him to the Pope for a blessing!” he shouted. Before our eyes, our godson was placed quickly in front of John Paul, and was given a beautiful kiss on the face. The golf cart slowly wheeled on down the line. We were left in awe and wonder at what had just happened. In the next day ahead, we watched the rest of the World Youth Day events on television, deeply sharing in the joy of all those who had made great efforts to be with our Pope.

- Marie Richard

John Paul II: A leader with authority and compassion

I have been asked to record some of my reactions to the death of Pope John Paul II. My overwhelming sentiment is one of great thanksgiving to God for having given us such a powerful leader at this, a most challenging time in the Church and in the world. In retrospect it seems obvious to see how carefully the Lord prepared John Paul for his particular role in our particular time of history.

From 1990 to 1996, I was General Secretary for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Executive Officers of the Conference went to Rome once a year to confer with the various departments of the Vatican. A visit with the Holy Father was always a highlight of the trip. Occasionally he would invite the three of us to dine with him in his private dining room.

The Holy Father was very easy to meet. He was very hospitable. Perhaps his most amazing characteristic was his keen interest in the world and its peoples. He always asked all kinds of questions. It was very easy to feel comfortable with him.

George Weigel was commissioned to write an official biography of the Holy Father. He was given a restricted number of hours to interview Pope John Paul, and was anxious to get as much information as possible. His biggest challenge, he records, was to get the Holy Father to stop asking him questions! How would you tell a Pope, "It's now my turn to ask?"

There are any number of things one could say about Pope John Paul II. I would like to mention just two. He was a superb teacher. His writings will serve as guideposts for the Church for many decades to come. Secondly, the Holy Father was a persistent proponent of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. So often he reminded us that the Council was God's providential preparation of the Church for our ministry in the third millennium.

Pope John Paul was truly a colossal figure on the world's stage. He led the Church with authority and with compassion. I believe his papacy is a profound realization of the promise of Jesus: "I will be with you until the end of time." As we look ahead to the election of a new Bishop of Rome, let us all be thankful for the faithful love and care which the Lord always shows to His people.

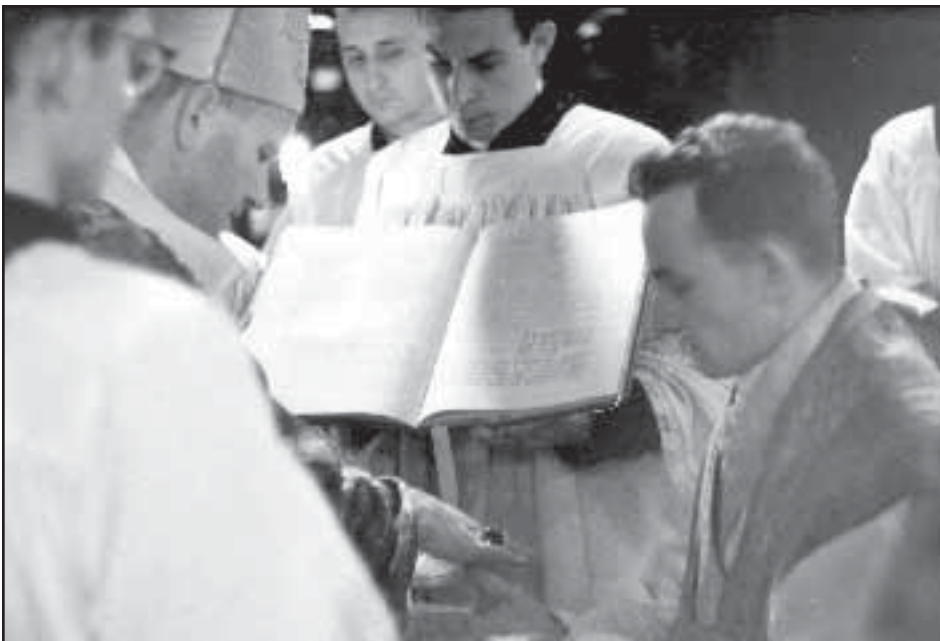
- Archbishop James Weisgerber



With Archbishop Weisgerber in the Pope's private apartment in Rome

Visit to Winnipeg, September 1969

On Monday, September 8, 1969, His Eminence Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, celebrated Mass at Holy Ghost Church. This visit to the parish was part of the Cardinal's tour of Polish centres in Canada. (Photos right and below)



A memorable ordination, April 1965

In April, 1965, 23-year-old Henryk Laciak was ordained to the ministerial priesthood by the Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla. Fr. Laciak, who recently celebrated 40 years of priesthood, is currently pastor at Our Lady of Victory Parish in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. (Photo left)