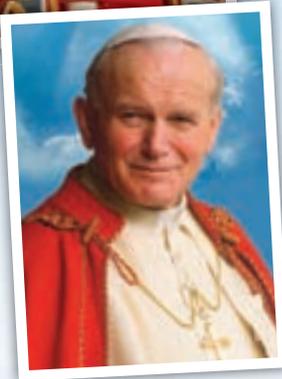
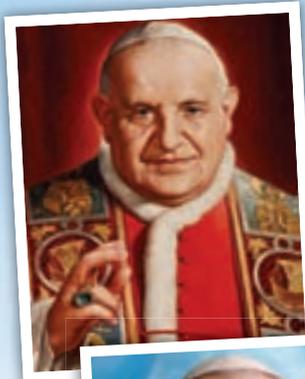


Saints for a Modern World

By Woodeene Koenig-Bricker

Of the 266 men who have been pope, 80 are recognized as saints. On April 27, the feast of Divine Mercy, two more join the list: **POPE JOHN XXIII** and **POPE JOHN PAUL II**.



What makes their canonizations so exceptional is not just that they are being elevated on the same day, but it's likely that someone in your family remembers Pope John, and certainly many people are familiar with Pope John Paul II. These two pontiffs are saints of and for the modern world. In many ways, they represent the entrance of the Church into contemporary times: Pope John XXIII with the calling of the Second Vatican Council, and Pope John Paul II with his missionary zeal and outreach to the entire world.

POPE JOHN XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli on Nov. 25, 1881. The fourth of fourteen children, he was ordained in 1904 and held many offices including patriarch of Venice. At age 76, he was elected pope. The Second Vatican Council was opened during his four-year reign. He did not live to see it completed, dying on June 3, 1963, of stomach cancer.

POPE JOHN PAUL II was the second longest serving pope in Church history, governing for 27 years. Born Karol Józef Wojtyła in Poland on May 18, 1920, he was one of the most influential men of the 20th century, being credited with helping bring about the downfall of communism. He was also the most widely traveled pope, visiting 129 countries. He died on April 2, 2005, after suffering for several years from Parkinson's disease.

MODELS OF THE FAITH FOR FAMILIES



For families, these two new saints represent the best qualities of the leaders of the Church. Pope John XXIII was both pastoral and visionary. He encouraged each of us by saying: "Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do."

Pope John Paul II was the charismatic champion of the faith. An intellectual with the mass appeal of a rock star, Pope Francis has called him "the great missionary of the Church," because he was "a man who proclaimed the Gospel everywhere." For Pope John Paul, family was paramount. Calling families "the domestic church," he said: "To maintain a joyful family requires much from both the parents and the children. Each member of the family has to become, in a special way, the servant of the others."

Together these two new saints remind us that just as each member of a family has his or her own unique gifts, so, too, we have our own gifts to share with our larger family of the faith. In addition, their canonization at the same time encourages us to see how God uses different individuals, with their unique skills and abilities, to spread the Gospel. We are not to be in competition with one another, but rather are to express God's love in our own individual ways, following the example of these two holy men who used their special charisms for the good of the entire Church.