’It is wonderful to be able to give oneself to the very end for the sake of the kingdom of God.’

— Pope John Paul II

May 18, 1920-April 2, 2005
Why we should call him Pope John Paul the Great

"A man's own weight, the proper weight of man!" exclaims the title character in the authorized English translation of Karol Wojtyła's ponderous three-act play, "The Jeweler's Shop." His jeweler's scales, he explains, "have this peculiarity that they weigh not the metal, but man's entire being and fate."

Taken in the singular, the concept is expressed also in the philosopher's query, "What is the measure of a man?" Put yet another way, how do we take stock and evaluate the life, character and contributions of an individual person?

In the case of the playwright Pope John Paul II, it seems a daunting task to take a comprehensive measure of his "proper weight." In paying tribute to a man whose service of the Church and humanity led him to reach out to the world like no pontiff before him, many possible recollections, stories, anecdotes and listings of achievements could be developed without fully capturing the essence of the fingerprint his pontificate leaves behind.

Even an encyclopedic treatment would prove insufficient to exhaust the mine of golden memories buried deep within the hearts of so many whose lives he touched. As a far less voluminous effort, this two-section issue of Our Sunday Visitor likewise can offer little more than a mere summarization of Pope John Paul II's life, his mission and his 26-plus-year reign as visible head of the Catholic Church.

We open with a biographical study written by OSV's Washington correspondent, Russell Shaw, whose nearly 50 years in Catholic journalism and membership on a key Vatican commission have afforded him an insider's appreciation of the papacy.

Afterward we examine Pope John Paul's impact on the various regions of the world, from the United States to Oceania to the conflict-ridden Holy Land.

Finally, we take a topical approach to understanding his pontificate by surveying his contributions of an individual person?

But why leave it to the historians of the 22nd century? Who are they to make such judgments about the "proper weight" of a man and a pontiff whom they will know only over the distance of time, with impressions gleaned from the writings of other historians and pundits?

As Catholics who have lived during his pontificate, we who loved and admired Pope John Paul and were the beneficiaries of his years as the Servant of the Servants of God, have the power today to establish his legacy by popular acclaim. There is no need to await the consensus of so-called experts of a future generation.

So let's call him, remember him, speak of him as Pope John Paul the Great and teach your children and grandchildren to do the same. After all, the name fits him well, as it aptly describes the measure of the man.

May he rest in peace.

Gerald Korson, Editor

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Our Sunday Visitor
200 Noll Plaza • Huntington, IN 46750
(800) 348-2440 • www.osv.com

Publisher: Greg Erlandson
Associate Publisher: Msgr. Owen F. Campion
Editor: Gerald Korson
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Copyright © 2005, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Our Sunday Visitor (USPS 896-960) ISSN 0130-6967) is published weekly by Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750. For single and bulk rates, please call 1-800-348-2440, ext. 2450. Periodicals postage paid at Huntington, IN 46750, and additional entry points. Postmaster: Send address changes to Our Sunday Visitor, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750.

Editorial Address: Our Sunday Visitor, Editorial Dept., 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; Phone: 1-800-348-2440; Fax: 1-260-356-8472; E-mail: oursunvis@osv.com.

Circulation Address: Our Sunday Visitor, Circulation Dept., 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; Phone: 1-800-348-2440; Fax: 1-260-356-8472; E-mail: osvsales@osv.com. Bulk rates available upon request.

Advertising Address: Our Sunday Visitor, Advertising Dept., 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; Phone: 1-800-348-2440; Fax: 1-260-356-8472; E-mail: adsales@osv.com.

Available in microfilm. Write: UMI, 300 North Zeeb Rd., P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346; Phone: 1-800-521-0600.

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A total gift of self

Centered on the Savior

Throughout his life, Pope John Paul II was known for many diverse attributes — defense of life, fierce opposition to communism, fervent devotion to Mary and love of the outdoors — but he always kept his discipleship to Jesus Christ and his care of the Church at the forefront.

By Russell Shaw

While only history can take the final measure of the stature of Pope John Paul II, in the eyes of contemporaries he was — spiritually, morally, and intellectually — a towering figure. Even before his death April 2, 2005 at the age of 84, many called him “John Paul the Great.”

An avid outdoorsman, Father Karol Wojtyla reads in a kayak in 1955. Three years later, he was on another kayaking expedition when he was called to Warsaw for the announcement that he was to be made a bishop.
He played a crucial — and possibly decisive — role in the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. He resisted forces threatening Church unity from within, while launching initiatives to position Christianity for the third millennium.

An ardent defender of human life on issues from abortion to the death penalty, he used fiery eloquence to champion what he called the culture of life against the culture of death.

Inevitably, Pope John Paul II had critics. Some objected to his teaching on sexual morality, his insistence that the Church cannot ordain women, his continued requirement of celibacy for priests of the Western Church and his centralized leadership style. He was blamed for intervening too much in bishops’ affairs — or else, as in the sex-abuse scandal in the United States, for not intervening enough.

Resistance to these and other elements of his pontificate may have set the stage for bitter conflicts in the years ahead. But the critics could take nothing from the remarkable force of his personality or his extraordinary achievements.

**Seamless contradictions**

Pope John Paul II combined diverse, even seemingly contradictory, traits and did so with ease. He was a charismatic contemplative, a prophetic voice of orthodoxy, a sophisticated intellectual who preached and practiced fervent devotion to the Virgin Mary, a philosopher with an actor’s flair and a love for skiing and hiking.

By naming bishops for 26 years, he reshaped the world hierarchy. He published a stream of documents comprising perhaps the largest body of teaching by any pope. He was a human-rights advocate who opposed abortion and birth control, and he defended traditional marriage and family life in innovative theological terms.

Linking these and other themes was his visionary determination to lead the Church into the third millennium and spread Christianity in developing regions of the world while rekindling the faith in post-Christian areas like Western Europe.

Central to virtually all he did was the conviction emphatically stated in 1979 in his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* ("The Redeemer of Man"), that "Jesus Christ is the center of the universe and of history." It was on Oct. 16, 1978, the second day of the conclave to elect a pope, that Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Krakow, Poland, was elected 263rd successor of St. Peter as head of the universal Church and Bishop of Rome.

He chose the name John Paul to signal continuity with his immediate predecessor, John Paul I, whose pontificate had lasted only 33 days, as well as Popes John XXIII (1958-1963), who summoned the Second Vatican Council, and Paul VI (1963-78), who presided over the last three of its four sessions and the next 15 turbulent years.

**Trailblazer**

His pontificate set precedents in many ways.

- He was the first non-Italian pope since Adrian VI (1522-23), the first Polish pope and, at 58, the youngest pope since Blessed Pius IX (1846-78).
- He was the third-longest reigning pope and the most-traveled in history. Through August 2004, he completed 104 pastoral visits outside. Five times as pope — in 1979, 1987, 1993, 1995 and 1999 — he visited the United States. Many of his trips were to Third World countries in Asia and Africa, which he cherished as growth areas for the Church.
- Capitalizing on his rapport with young people, Pope John Paul II presided over a series of highly successful World Youth Days, which were attended by millions. Denver was the site of August 1993 event. On these occasions he challenged his young audiences to resist the allure of the consumer society and heed the call of Christ.
- His many teaching initiatives included the Catechism of Christianity for the third millennium.
Ten-year-old Karol, pictured in the second row, second from right, poses with his class during a 1930 school visit to the Wieliczka salt mines in Poland. He attended Marcin Wadowita School in Wadowice. His father is also in the second row, fourth from right. (CNS PHOTO FROM CATHOLIC PRESS)

Before he took the world stage, the future pope took the stage at the Studio 39 theater in Krakow, posing here for a promotional poster. He wrote scripts in addition to acting in dramatic productions. (CNS PHOTO FROM CATHOLIC PRESS)

Father Karol Wojtyla received the Sacrament of Holy Orders on Nov. 1, 1946, and celebrated his first Mass as a priest in the crypt of St. Leonard at Wawel Cathedral in Krakow, Poland. (CNS FILE PHOTO)

Ten-year-old Karol, pictured in the second row, second from right, poses with his class during a 1930 school visit to the Wieliczka salt mines in Poland. He attended Marcin Wadowita School in Wadowice. His father is also in the second row, fourth from right. (CNS PHOTO FROM CATHOLIC PRESS)

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Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak, apostolic administrator of Krakow.

Archbishop Baziak had been “administrator” of the archdiocese since Cardinal Sapieha’s death in 1951, because of a dispute between the Vatican and the Polish communist government over the naming of bishops prevented his appointment as ordinary. After Archbishop Baziak’s death in 1962, Bishop Wojtyła became vicar capitular and then, on Jan. 13, 1964, archbishop of Krakow — the first residential head of the archdiocese in 13 years.

He attended all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), speaking several times and helping to draft Gaudium et Spes, (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).

He also contributed to Dignitatis Humanae (the Declaration on Religious Freedom) and Inter Mirifica (the Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication).

Pope Paul VI made him a cardinal in the consistory of June 28, 1967. Although scheduled to attend the first general assembly of the world Synod of Bishops in Rome that September and October, he stayed home instead as a gesture of solidarity with Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski of Warsaw, Poland’s Primate, whom the communist government refused a passport.

In October 1969, he participated in the first extraordinary assembly of the synod. Also in that year, his major philosophical work, “The Acting Person,” was published and he became vice president of the new Polish bishops’ conference.

In 1971, he took part in the second general assembly of the synod and was elected to the synod-planning body. He continued to attend synod assemblies up to his election as Pope.

May 8, 1972, marked the opening of the archdiocesan synod of Krakow, which he convened and was to see conclude during his visit to Poland as Pope in 1979. In that year he published “Foundations of Renewal: A Study on the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council.”

Cardinal Wojtyła traveled widely during the 1970s. Besides frequent trips to Rome, his journeys took him to Western Europe, to North America including the United States, and even to Australia for a Eucharistic Congress in March 1973, with stops in the Philippines and New Guinea.

In Poland, he joined Cardinal Wyszynski and the other bishops in the tortuous process by which the Church not only negotiated its survival under communism but won increasingly more freedom, while at the same time championing the nation’s resistance to oppression.

In 1976, he preached the Lenten retreat for Pope Paul and members of the Roman Curia. The meditations were published under the title “A Sign of Contradiction.” That year, he also took part in the international Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia.

A Polish pope


When John Paul I died unexpectedly on Sept. 28, Cardinal Wojtyła joined 110 other cardinals in a second conclave — from which he emerged on the second day of voting, Oct. 16, as Pope John Paul II.

His tremendous work and service — cataloged, honored and sparking new inspiration in this special tribute issue of Our Sunday Visitor — would shape the Church and the world in the face of the third millennium.

Russell Shaw is OSV’s Washington correspondent and the author of several OSV books, including “Papal Primacy in the Third Millennium” ($12.95).
RIGHT: Pope John Paul II embraces Cardinal Stefan Wysynski of Poland at the Vatican shortly after his installation. CNS FILE PHOTO BY ARTURO MARI

BELOW: Archbishop Karol Wojtyla receives the cardinal’s red biretta from Pope Paul VI at the beginning of the consistory June 26, 1967, in the Sistine Chapel. The future Pope John Paul II had a warm relationship with Pope Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini), who served as a priest in Warsaw in 1923. CNS FILE PHOTO

BOTTOM: Karol Wojtyla waves to waiting crowds in St. Peter’s Square on Oct. 16, 1978, when he was elected the first non-Italian pope in 455 years. CNS FILE

Pope John Paul II’s first urbi et orbi

On Oct. 17, 1978, the day after he was elected, Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass in the Sistine Chapel and delivered his first homily urbi et orbi (“to the Church and the world”). Here is an excerpt (he uses the traditional papal plural to refer to himself):

“Brothers, dear sons and daughters, the recent happenings of the Church and of the world are for us all a healthy warning: How will our pontificate be? What is the destiny the Lord has assigned to His Church in the next years? What road will mankind take in this period of time as it approaches the year 2000? To these bold questions the only answer is: “God knows” (cf. Cor 12:2-3).

“The course of our life which has brought us unexpectedly to the supreme responsibility and office of apostolic Service is of little interest. Our person — we ought to say — should disappear when confronted with the weighty office we must fill. And so a speech must be changed into an appeal. After praying to the Lord, we feel the need of your prayers to gain that indispensable, heavenly strength that will make it possible for us to take up the work of our predecessors from the point where they left off..."

“We behold also the Christian families and communities, the many associations dedicated to the apostolate, the faithful who even if they are not known to us individually, are not anonymous, not strangers, nor even in a lower place, for they are included in the glorious company of the Church of Christ. Among them we look with particular affection on the weak, the poor, the sick and those afflicted with sorrow.

“Now, at the beginning of our universal pastoral ministry, we wish to open to them our heart. Do not you, brothers and sisters, share by your sufferings in the passion of our Redeemer, and in a certain way complete it? (cf. Col 1:24). The unworthy successor of St Peter, who proposes to explore the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephes 3:8), has the greatest need of your help, your prayers, your devotedness or ‘sacrifice,’ and this he most humbly asks of you.”
PAPACY

A pontiff for the new Christian millennium

John Paul II's far-ranging impact on Church and the contemporary redefined the papacy

By Russell Shaw

From the very start of his papacy, Pope John Paul II committed himself to carrying out the program of the Second Vatican Council. Rather than simply standing pat on the council, however, he put his own master plan on the record in March 1979 in the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* ("The Redeemer of Man").

This notable exercise in "Christian anthropology" situated the human person at the center of the Church's concerns. Echoing Vatican II, the new Pope insisted that human nature and human destiny can only be fully understood in light of Christ. These themes foreshadowed the message of many other documents and initiatives in the years to come.

Social doctrine was among the areas in which Pope John Paul II's teaching marked an important advance. In line with his personalist emphasis, he defended human rights against what he saw as the principal dehumanizing forces of the 20th century — state totalitarianism as found in Soviet communism, fascism and Nazism, and Western-style consumerist individualism grounded in atheistic secular humanism.

Projecting a profound skepticism of all secular utopias, he once wrote: "When people think they possess the secret of a perfect social organization which makes evil impossible, they also think that they can use any means, including violence and deceit, in order to bring it into being."

**Communism, consumerism**

Pope John Paul II identified three causes for the fall of communism present within the communist system itself — violations of workers' rights, gross economic inefficiency and "the spiritual void brought about by atheism." Others added a fourth, extrinsic cause — his own pastoral visits to Poland in June 1979 and June 1983, which sparked Polish religious fervor and sense of national identity, and his resolute support of the Solidarity labor movement.

With the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and eventually in the Soviet Union, it became increasingly clear that Pope John Paul II was hardly less troubled by the individualistic consumerism of the West, with its relativistic ethic and hedonistic lifestyle.

Much of this concern focused on the United States. During visits to the United States in 1979, 1987, 1995 and 1999, he exhorted Americans to live by the values of their founding documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, with their philosophical basis in natural law.

In the 1988 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* ("On Social Concerns"), the Pope spoke of a phenomenon he called "superdevelopment," described in terms that fit wealthy nations such as America. Saying it "consists in an excessive availability of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups," he warned that superdevelopment "easily makes people slaves of ‘possession’ and of immediate gratification."

Authentic development, he said, requires growth in all dimensions of the person — spiritual as well as material — and this demands a fundamental change in lifestyle by affluent nations.

Friends of free-market capitalism were heartened by the appearance three years later of a second wide-ranging social encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* ("The Hundredth Year"), in which he seemed to take a more benign view of capitalism. There, the Pope acknowledged the advantages of the market economy while warning against "radical capitalistic ideology."

This was a theme he returned to often, particularly assailing the economic neoliberalism that he accused of putting profit ahead of persons in developing countries.
For women, for life

Pope John Paul II strongly opposed the United States over the Persian Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraq War in 2003. Especially, though, his quarrel with American government policies came to a head at the United Nations conference on population and development in Cairo in September 1994, where he clashed with the Clinton administration over abortion. The Pope's position prevailed — the conference document was amended to say abortion is not an acceptable means of family planning.

The battle was joined again a year later in connection with the U.N.-sponsored conference on women in Beijing. On this occasion he appointed Harvard University law professor Mary Ann Glendon to head the Holy See's delegation, the first time a woman had been named to such a post.

Controversies like these generated criticism of John Paul among people who called him out of step with modern times. His opposition to abortion and contraception, as well as to the ordination of women as priests, also led some to accuse him of insensitivity to women.

In fact, though, in his writing and pastoral work he had for years showed deep appreciation for women. He was the only pontiff in history whose published works included poems and plays warmly celebrating married love. And as pope, he devoted several major documents to women's dignity and rights, including the 1988 apostolic letter Mulieris Dignitatem ("On the Dignity and Vocation of Women").

Moreover, although it only added to feminists' discontent, devotion to a woman, the Virgin Mary, was central to his own spirituality. While reflecting Polish popular piety, it was elaborated in sophisticated theological terms in the 1987 encyclical Redemptoris Mater ("The Mother of the Redeemer").

John Paul also had a relationship of mutual esteem with Mother Teresa of Calcutta, foundress of the Missionaries of Charity, who died in 1997 and whom he declared blessed on Oct. 19, 2003.

With her he shared an abhorrence of abortion, spelled out — along with other elements of his teaching on the sanctity of life — in the 1995 encyclical Evangelium Vitae ("The Gospel of Life"). Besides condemning abortion, the document rejected euthanasia and took a strong stand against capital punishment, a subject John Paul often returned to while requesting clemency for persons facing execution.

Undergirding his position on such questions was the moral philosophy set forth in the 1993 encyclical Veritatis Splendor ("The Splendor of Truth"). Here, the Pope affirmed a natural-law ethic and absolute moral norms, while rejecting proportionality, a moral theory currently held by many Catholic moral theologians in the United States and other countries.

In Fides et Ratio ("Faith and Reason"), published in 1998, he wrote of the need philosophy and theology have for each other, and called for a renewal of philosophical studies grounded in the traditional conviction of Western thought that it is possible to know the truth. Loss of that certainty in modern times, he wrote, had brought about a theoretical and practical state of doubt best described as "nihilism."

Orthodox watchdog

With Pope John Paul II's approval, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, took a number of steps that Catholics of the left bitterly assailed.

These included declarations that the views of the Swiss theologian Hans Küng and the American theologian Father Charles Curran disqualified them as "Catholic theologians" so that they could not hold posts in pontifically approved theological faculties.

In 1999, the congregation barred two Americans, Father Robert Nugent and Sister Jeannine Gramick, from pastoral work with homosexuals because of doubts about their views on the morality of homosexuality.

Documents published by the congregation in 1984 and 1986 criticized aspects of the theology of liberation. The congregation also rejected a plan by German bishops to let some divorced and remarried Catholics receive Communion without having their first marriages declared invalid.

In 1999, the Pope himself insisted that the bishops of Germany quit a government-backed counseling program for pregnant women because some of the women used certificates from Catholic counseling centers to get abortions.

Other important — and controversial — statements from Cardinal Ratzinger's congregation in these years concerned such matters as homosexuality and same-sex unions, the responsibilities of Catholic politicians and Catholic voters, and the unique salvific necessity of Christ and the Catholic Church.

Conflict with the Catholic far right also was sometimes a feature of this pontificate.

The best-known case involved Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, a French missionary bishop violently opposed to Vatican II's teaching on religious liberty and its liturgical innovations. In 1988, Archbishop Lefebvre was excommunicated and ordained bishops without authorization from the Pope. He died in 1991. Some of his followers have been reconciled with Rome, but some remain in schism.

Ecumenism, dialogue

John Paul worked hard in the cause of Christian unity, meeting and often praying with other Christian leaders, including the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople and the archbishop of Canterbury.

He placed special emphasis on reunion with the Orthodox, calling the Eastern and Western Churches the "two lungs" of the Church, and was warmly received by some Orthodox bodies — while receiving a cold shoulder from the Russian and Greek Orthodox.

In 1999, he approved a historic joint Lutheran-Catholic statement on the topic of justification, a central point of dispute in the 16th-century Protestant Reformation.

Spelling out his ecumenical aspirations in the 1995 encyclical Ut Unum Sint ("That All May Reconcile").

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, greets Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in February 2004. With the Pope's approval, Cardinal Ratzinger took steps to preserve orthodoxy in the Catholic Church, many of which upset Catholics of the left.
Pope John Paul II: Biography

Trials and triumphs

Pope John Paul II was convinced that God had chosen him to lead the Church into the third millennium, and an outpouring of papal travels and special events accompanied the jubilee year in 2000. His journeys included trips to the Middle East and the Holy Land. He also published a document called Novo Millennio Ineunte ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium"), setting out an agenda for the Church.

John Paul's reign was not an unbroken string of triumphs. He was profoundly disturbed by the progressive secularization of Europe in these decades, calling it "the loss of Europe's Christian memory."

The European Union's refusal in 2004 to include a reference to Europe's Christian roots in the preamble to the new European constitution was a grave disappointment. The Pope also was frustrated by his failure to obtain a green light from the Russian Orthodox Church for a pastoral visit to Russia.

Assassination attempt

A still-mysterious event in his papacy was the Pope's wounding by a Turkish gunman, Mehmet Ali Agca, who shot him at close range as he greeted the crowd in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981. It is not known whether the assassin acted alone or on behalf of others — and which others.

After a six-hour operation, John Paul was hospitalized in the Gemelli Hospital for 77 days. In a dramatic gesture of forgiveness, he visited Ali Agca in the Rebibbia prison on Dec. 27, 1983. The Pope attributed his survival to Our Lady of Fatima, on whose feast the shooting took place.

Although he resumed his activities after a difficult recovery, his health and strength declined over the years, a hard experience for a man accustomed to vigorous physical activity. In July 1992, he had colon surgery to remove a noncancerous tumor; in November 1993, his shoulder was dislocated in a fall; he suffered a broken femur in another fall in April 1994; in October 1996, he had an appendectomy; in January and February 2005, it was back to the hospital to be treated for flu and breathing problems.

And from the mid-1990s on he was more and more immobilized and had increasing trouble speaking because of a neurological condition widely assumed to be Parkinson's disease.

Complete acceptance

But the increasingly frail Pope soldiered on, making journeys, giving audiences, presiding at liturgical ceremonies and delivering talks as best he could.

It was a display of indomitable will prefigured in 1979's Redemptor Hominis.

Recalling his election as Pope, he wrote:

"It was to Christ the Redeemer that my feelings and my thoughts were directed on Oct. 16 of last year. When I was asked: 'Do you accept?' I then replied: 'With obedience in faith to Christ, my Lord, and with trust in the Mother of Christ and the Church, I accept.'"

Pope John Paul II went on accepting for another 25 years.
His close attention to certain episcopal appointments, such as the 2003 selections of longtime Vatican adviser Cardinal Justin Rigali to lead the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Archbishop Sean P. O’Malley, O.F.M. Cap., to take over the scandal-plagued Archdiocese of Boston, reflected how closely this Pope interested himself in the affairs of what separatists call the “American Church.”

It was not a new development. More than just reshaping American Catholicism, his aim for years was to draw it closer to Rome.

From both sides now
The results are controversial.
Conservative Catholics generally viewed this pontificate as a godsend—a return to sanity after years of chaos. Even so, some of the Catholic right thought Pope John Paul was not sufficiently tough and consistent.

Liberal Catholics saw him as a strong-willed pontiff who thwarted their hopes for change. Peter Steinfels, former chief religion correspondent of The New York Times, echoed this view in his book “A People Adrift” (Simon & Schuster, $26), saying that “centralization of power” had been a hallmark under Pope John Paul II.

The crisis in American Catholicism brought to a head by the clergy sex-abuse scandal tarnished the Pope’s image in the eyes of some members of both groups. Such people blamed him for not doing enough to head off groups. Some members of both Catholicism brought to a head by the clergy sex-abuse scandal tarnished the Pope’s image in the eyes of some members of both groups. Such people blamed him for not doing enough to head off the problem or solve it.

Yet no one seriously doubts that Pope John Paul II repeatedly demonstrated intense concern for the United States and the Church here during his entire pontificate.

Power for good and ill
Surveying America’s global influence—political, economic, military and cultural—the Pope saw enormous power for good and also for evil. America’s success in exporting its values—from democracy and human rights to consumerism and abortion-related “choice”—made him ambivalent.

His dislike for what he deplored about America was dramatically expressed in clashes with the Clinton administration over abortion and population control. It also helped account for his opposition to the U.S.-led Persian Gulf War in 1991 and the 2003 Iraq War, although he supported the post-9/11 U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan as legitimate self-defense against terrorism.

Time and again, he has urged Americans to cling to the natural law morality underlying documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. “Democracy cannot be sustained without a shared commitment to certain moral truths about the human person and human community,” he declared in Baltimore in 1995. “Much the same vision—of a body with power to do great good or great harm in many other places—apparently shaped his view of U.S. Catholicism.”

Aware that the Church in the United States is one of the largest, wealthiest and most influential bodies in the entire Catholic world, Pope John Paul II attempted to change U.S. Catholicism for the better, especially through bishops’ appointments.

The result has been the emergence of the “Pope John Paul II bishops,” who are in some ways a departure from the “pastoral” bishops who preceded them. By and large, these bishops tend to put more emphasis on adherence to Church doctrine and discipline. Men like Cardinal Rigali and Archbishop O’Malley, as well as Archbishops Timothy Dolan of Milwaukee and Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., of Denver, are representative figures in this group.

But the Pope’s interest in America and American Catholicism took many other forms besides putting bishops in place.

His first trip outside Italy in January 1979 was to attend a meeting of the Latin American bishops in the Dominican Republic, while his second was the historic visit to his native Poland in June of that year. But his third trip, preceded only by a short stop in Ireland, was to the United States.

Stumping for truth
Arriving in the rain in Boston on Oct. 1, 1979, the Pope traveled to New York, Philadelphia, Des Moines and Chicago, finishing up in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 7. The whirlwind tour included an address to the United Nations, a White House meeting with President Jimmy Carter and a series of spectacular public masses and other events that drew huge crowds everywhere.

From an ecclesiastical perspective, the most important of his many talks was his Oct. 5 address in Chicago to the U.S. bishops. Speaking of the hierarchy’s “ministry of truth,” he commended the bishops for upholding Church doctrine on issues like contraception, abortion and the indissolubility of marriage.

“Brothers in Christ, as we proclaim the truth in love, it is not possible for us to avoid all criticism, nor is it possible to please everyone. ... One of the greatest rights of the faithful is to receive the word of God in its purity and integrity as guaranteed by the magisterium of the universal Church,” he said.

After 1979, Pope John Paul II returned to the United States for a swing through the South, Southwest and West Coast in September 1987; for World Youth Day in Denver in August 1993; and for an October 1995 trip organized around a second U.N. appearance and including events in New York, Brooklyn and Baltimore. He also visited St. Louis in January 1999 on a trip that included major Church events in Mexico.

Stomping dissent
During the 1987 trip, Pope John Paul met again with all the American bishops and delivered another fraternal, blunt talk. Speaking in Los Angeles on Sept. 16, he rejected a pick-and-choose approach to doctrine, including issues of sexuality and marriage.

“It is sometimes claimed that dissent from the magisterium is totally compatible with being a ‘good Catholic’ and poses no obstacle to the reception of the sacraments. This is a grave error that challenges the teaching office of the bishops of the United States and elsewhere,” he said.

Besides his trips, he also has had extended contacts with American bishops in other contexts. These included a special meeting with U.S. archbishops in Rome in March 1989—at a time when tensions between the Church in the United States and the Holy See were thought to be especially sharp—and the ad limina visits that Church law requires of diocesan bishops to make to the Holy See every few years.

Sometimes the Pope took a direct hand in major problems of the Church in the United States.

In 1990, he published a document on Catholic higher education called Ex Corde Ecclesiae (“From the Heart of the Church”). Although it applies to Church-related colleges and universities everywhere, it was aimed especially at the 235 in the United States—by far the largest number of any country, many of which have distanced themselves from Church authority since the 1960s.

Ex Corde Ecclesiae’s most controversial provision was to insist that, in line with Church law, teachers of theology in Catholic colleges and universities seek a mandatum—certification from the local bishop that they teach in union with the Church.

The U.S. bishops and Rome also butted heads over English translations of the liturgy and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. While some accounts of these conflicts reduce the issue to inclusive language, what is fundamentally at stake is the faithfulness of the English versions to their Latin originals and especially their doctrinal content.

Crisis explodes
Nothing better illustrates the

Part of the New York skyline is pictured as Pope John Paul II celebrates Mass in Central Park Oct. 7, 1995. At least 100,000 people turned out under overcast skies and a light rain to see the Pope. He also made an appearance at the United Nations during that 1995 trip.
shadows and ambiguities of Pope John Paul’s relationship with American Catholicism than the clergy sex-abuse scandal.

Although this problem first surfaced publicly in the mid-1980s and was known to Church authorities much earlier than that, Pope John Paul left it to the bishops to deal with it. With some exceptions, most eventually did, up to a point at least.

When the scandal — including not just sexual abuse by some priests but gross mishandling of the situation by some bishops over many years — exploded on the national scene early in 2002, the Vatican was slow to grasp the magnitude of the crisis.

With pleas for action mounting, however, the Pope summoned U.S. cardinals and leaders of the bishops’ conference to Rome in April 2002 to meet with him and Vatican officials and hammer out a response. The sessions produced no quick and easy solutions, but they did mark an important step in the painful process of finding a viable approach.

Even so, the scandal and the crisis of leadership it caused illustrate a worrisome fact. Despite the Pope’s best efforts for more than 26 years, conditions in American Catholicism may now be more troubled than ever. Nor were all his choices for bishop up to the job.

Views of Pope John Paul ran the gamut and tended to tell as much about those who held them as they did about the Pope. A good illustration of the deep hostility he evoked in some quarters was the claim by award-winning gay playwright Tony Kushner that “Pope John Paul II condones murder” where homosexuals are concerned.

Younger priests and young orthodox Catholic lay people often idealized this Pope and took him as a model.

“He assumes that they want God, that they want to fulfill their calling in life. He assumes they’re up to the task,” wrote Colleen Carroll Campbell, quoting a Jewish convert to Catholicism in her book “The New Faithful” (Loyola Press, $20).

Reflecting on the close but sometimes troubled relationship between Pope John Paul and the Church in the United States, one thinks of Pope Leo XIII, who in 1899 condemned a heresy he called “Americanism.”

People still argue about whether Americanism really existed and what exactly it was. But Pope Leo’s basic insight was sound: Catholics in the United States were at risk of becoming more at home with an American culture steeped in the individualism and libertarianism of secularized Protestantism than with their own Catholic tradition.

A century further along in the process of Catholic assimilation into American culture, Pope John Paul II may have reached a similar conclusion. His efforts to cope with the multiple challenges the situation poses for the Church had mixed results.

His main achievement may have been to serve as a catalyst and a goad in a great sorting-out — between Catholic Americans who share his vision of the faith and American Catholics who, on the whole, do not.

Russell Shaw is Our Sunday Visitor’s Washington correspondent.

U.S. bishop reflects on John Paul II

MILWAUKEE (Zenit) — Every bishop has a threefold calling to teach, govern and sanctify, but few fulfilled that office as well as Pope John Paul II.

So says Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan. In an interview just months before the Pope’s death, he described how the Pope’s example and recent writings on the role of a bishop have influenced the American prelate’s own service to the Church.

Archbishop Dolan: The Holy Father is a man of intense prayer. Pastores Gregis emphasizes repeatedly the necessity for regular, deep, consistent prayer in the life of the bishop. The people need to see their bishop at prayer.

Secondly, I have learned from the Pope’s writings the power of presence. He knows that it is very important for people to see their bishop, to be with him. Priests know this is true in their pastoral ministry.

I think the third message that I learned as a bishop both in “Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way” and in Pastores Gregis was the necessity of being a real agent of evangelization for the culture.

Archbishop Timothy Dolan: The Holy Father is a man of intense prayer. Pastores Gregis emphasizes repeatedly the necessity for regular, deep, consistent prayer in the life of the bishop. The people need to see their bishop at prayer.

Zenit: What surprised you about his personal stories?

Archbishop Dolan: Two things were remarkable to me. First, the profound impact of Poland on him came home so vividly. It has been said that Poland is a country where Catholicism is in the stones. The culture, society, history, art and literature are all steeped in the richness of Catholicism.

This is in every cell of Karol Jozef Wojtyla’s body. So, the first thing that stood out was how profoundly this man is a son of Poland and how deeply he loves his country and its culture.

The second thing that jumped out at me was how comfortable he is with the laity — how many lay friends he has. He speaks often about his priest friends, but what comes out are the friends who have nurtured his life who are among the laity.

Zenit: What can you take from Pope John Paul II’s experience as bishop to inform your own service to the Church?

Archbishop Dolan: First of all, I have to be a man on fire with love for Jesus Christ. I have to be a man at peace with myself and with my mission and vocation as a bishop; a man who has some very practical pastoral goals in mind that never leave my attention; a man who is not afraid, who firmly believes that Jesus is in charge of my life and that his grace is sufficient.

I need not be afraid about “casting out to the deep” and calling my people to sanctity, to heroic virtue and to perfection. He tells us that this is what he did in Krakow; that it is what he has done as bishop of Rome and bishop of the Church universal.

A very beautiful model of a bishop that I think John Paul II exemplifies is that a bishop should be to his priests what a pastor is to his people.
EUROPE

Pontiff was the Slavic prophet of European unity

John Paul II had proactive role in reshaping postmodern Europe and is credited with an assist in the collapse of Communist rule

By Jonathan Luxmoore

The pontificate of Pope John Paul II spanned an epoch — from the darkest, most perilous days of Cold War division to the bright promise of a constitution for a fledgling European Union binding East and West. Born three months after Marshall Jozef Pilsudski’s Polish legions had driven Lenin’s invading Red Army from the gates of Warsaw at the “Miracle on the Vistula,” Karol Wojtyla had been a child of his times.

He had experienced the late 1930s tension at Krakow’s Jagiellonian University, as the political middle ground was eroded by competing supporters of Soviet-style communism and right-wing nationalism. He had also witnessed the horrors of Nazi wartime occupation, when the Jewish community he had known since infancy was wiped out at the nearby German-run Auschwitz concentration camp.

As communist rule was imposed after World War II, Father Wojtyla had become unusual among Polish priests in managing to combine his classical Thomist training with a detailed reading of Marxism. Unlike others, he had also gained early experience of the wider international Church, studying in Rome after his 1946 ordination as Pius XII began responding to the new postwar order.

They were to prove vital assets in shaping his approach to a divided Europe. But by the time of his election on Oct. 16, 1978, the East-West constellation was changing. The Carter administration in the United States had taken a tough stance on human rights and would impose sanctions on Moscow after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a year later. The policy of détente, which had dominated the 1970s, was being questioned, and would be discarded after the 1980 election of President Ronald Reagan.

Champion of freedom

Against this uneasy background, Eastern Europe’s communist regimes viewed the election of a Polish pope as a political provocation by the Catholic Church. Yet in reality, Pope John Paul II was destined to be a catalyst for resistance forces which were already taking shape.

In Redemptor Hominis (“The Redeemer of Man”), his first encyclical, he spoke of a Church impelled by false ideologies to become “more and more the custodian and champion of freedom.” Visiting his homeland three months later, he talked about the right of “often forgotten nations and peoples” to reclaim their place “at the heart of the Church.”

Having been left riven between two power blocs after the war, the Pope said, Europe must now rediscover its “fundamental unity,” by returning to the rich Christian heritage of Czechs and Slovaks, Croats and Slovones, Bulgarians and Lithuanians — by “opening the frontiers” to the Holy Spirit.

He saw communism less as an enemy than as a misunderstanding — a wrong turn toward a false conception of man and the world. To correct any error, one had first to understand it. After the chaos of war, communism had proven attractive to people of social and moral sensitivity. The challenge now was to provide a convincing up-to-date Christian reflection on problems Marxism had highlighted: labor-capital relations, work and property, exploitation and alienation.

It was the Church, not communism, the new Pope made clear during his Polish visit, which now stood on the side of man. The true “new man” had been born not through Vladimir Lenin’s revolution, but through God’s redemption.

There was perhaps a sense of déjà vu when industrial protests bearing the name “Solidarity” erupted at Poland’s Baltic ports in August 1980. With 9.5 million members amassed in its first months, Solidarity called itself a trade union. But it was really a social movement, motivated by civil and national demands, as much by economic and social ones. It owed much to pioneering efforts by Poland’s dissident “democratic opposition” in the 1970s — which then-Cardinal Wojtyla had covertly supported.

But the Pope’s 1979 pilgrimage had also been a kind of dress rehearsal.

Poland’s Catholic primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, cautiously tried to mediate with Poland’s communist rulers, fearing a full-scale confrontation could unleash a Soviet invasion. The Pope was more outspoken. Even when martial law was imposed on Dec. 13, 1981, he went on defending Solidarity’s legitimate demands, driving the point home while visiting Poland again in 1983.

Pope John Paul II had learned lessons from previous Polish industrial disorders. He realized that violent opposition would never be the answer to communist injustices. History had shown totalitarian regimes emerged stronger when challenged by force. But they had no answer to moral resistance, especially when society’s growing self-confidence was being matched by a loss of will by communist governments.

What the Pope gave the movement for freedom was a spark of certainty, using simple notions from Catholic tradition to remind confused and demoralized people of truths they knew but had forgotten.

Products of sin

While radical priests in Latin America had sought to answer desperate problems of poverty and exploitation by justifying armed opposition, the Pope had devised his own “liberation theology” for the different conditions of Eastern Europe. The social, economic, and political structures that held man captive everywhere, he concluded, were products of sin. And it was by liberating himself from sin that man could overcome them. In the end, true freedom would come only through forgiveness and penance, since these were the very values of all structures of power and violence sought to deny.

As the 1980s wore on, it was clear that a major breach had been made in the East-West wall cemented by Josef Stalin, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the 1945 Yalta Conference. It was to be widened by Pope John Paul’s sharp understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of rulers and being ruled, and by his capacity to take his cause directly to the common man over the heads of the wielders of power.

By 1989, the wheel had turned full circle from 1848, when Karl Marx and Frederick Engels first identified the papacy in “The Communist Manifesto” as a “power of the old Europe.” In their day, opposing the Church had been justified as a means of ridding humanity from bondage. In Eastern Europe, communism had transformed the Church into a symbol of human dignity and liberty.

The Pope had been engaged in a struggle over the future of Western Europe, too. In April 1979, he’d warned members of the European Parliament against...
thinking they “constitute Europe by themselves,” while on a pilgrimage to Subiaco in 1980 he had told Church leaders that Europe must be the setting for a common restoration of human values.

**United Europe**

By the late 1980s, however, with new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev proclaiming the reformist watchwords glasnost (“openness”) and perestroika (“reform”), Western governments had begun forging contacts with Eastern Europe’s dissidents, seeing them as potential co-rulers. In 1987, when Reagan and Gorbachev met for a groundbreaking summit at Reykjavik, Iceland, Eastern-West tensions had visibly eased.

That May, Pope John Paul told French Catholics of his vision of a “Europe united from the Atlantic to the Ural,” and denounced the “logic of blocs” in a new encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (“On Social Concerns”). “Europe is Christian in its very roots,” he declared in 1988, during the millennium of Eastern Christianity. “The two forms of the Church’s great tradition, the Eastern and the Western, the two forms of culture, complement each other like two ‘lungs’ of a single body.”

When Eastern Europe’s communist regimes began collapsing in late 1989, the euphoria was understandable. It was Gorbachev’s historic visit to the Vatican on Dec. 1 that best reflected the pontiff’s contribution. The Pope called it “a sign of the times that have slowly matured.” It was the start of friendship with the Soviet leader, who later acknowledged that the collapse of communist rule would have been “impossible” without the Pope. Yet the euphoria was not longstanding, as bitter quarrels quickly erupted over the future shape of state and society. The spiritual life of the margins could hardly be expected to survive the advent of fraudulent democracy, as conflicts over issues from abortion to property restitutions overshadowed the Church’s wider social role.

Pope John Paul II continued to champion his vision of a Christian society, paying six more visits to his native Poland in between spectacular peace missions to the Balkans and trips to eight ex-Soviet republics. By the late 1990s, the Vatican had established diplomatic ties with 28 postcommunist European states.

**Persistent problems**

Yet important problems remained.

Although ecumenical and interfaith initiatives had emerged as a pontifical theme, ties with Eastern Europe’s Orthodox churches remained tense. In his 1995 exhortation *Ut unum sint* (“That All May Be One”), Pope John Paul II affirmed the Church’s “irrevocable” commitment to dialogue and unity. But Orthodox leaders accused the Pope of going back on recent ecumenical gains. They saw the postcommunist revival of once-persecuted Greek Catholic communities as a challenge to Orthodox jurisdiction and accused Catholics of proselytizing in traditionally Orthodox territories.

Although groundbreaking papal visits between 1999 and 2002 dominated Orthodox hopes in Romania, Georgia, Ukraine and Bulgaria established some useful personal contacts, Russian Orthodox leaders insisted the Pope’s long-desired visit to Russia must be preceded by real progress on bilateral disputes.

On a wider front, the Pope believed he had a mission to rein in the more negative aspects of Western triumphalism. In his 1991 social encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (“Hundredth Year”), he denounced socialism and offered a conditional endorsement of free-market capitalism, but warned Western societies against seeing a “onesided victory for their own economic systems.”

Debate was also heating up over Europe’s future, particularly over the planned eastwards expansion of the 15-country European Union. Created from the ruins of World War II, the organization was conceived as a fountainhead for the freedom and tolerance that generations of Europeans had never known. Yet its 1986 Single Europe Act had confirmed a much narrower focus on economic objectives.

Churches and faiths were not even mentioned in the union’s crucial 1992 Maastricht Treaty, and although a clause acknowledging “churches and religious associations” was appended to a separate 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, this provided scant reassurance.

By the late 1990s, more than 50 church organizations had opened full-time offices in Brussels to ensure their voices were heard, including a Commission of Catholic Bishops Conferences (COMECE), drawn from E.U. member-states. There was added evidence that E.U. officials were listening.

As social forces encompassing the whole continent, Europe’s churches played a key role in encouraging interreligious tolerance after Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist atrocities in the United States and in helping refute visions of an anti-Muslim crusade during the 2003 Iraq War.

Yet doubts persisted. There were dismissive attitudes among eight postcommunist East European countries seeking to join the trading bloc. Revisiting Gniezno in 1997 for the 1,000th anniversary of the martyrdom of St. Wojciech, the Pope admitted that European unity remained a “still distant goal,” despite the “enormous burdens” now being shouldered by postcommunist societies.

Such misgivings had begun to ease the same year when the Vatican appointed a head of mission to the European Union, and a delegation of Polish bishops returned from a visit to E.U. headquarters in Brussels convinced the union was the way of the future. Czech and Hungarian Church leaders followed suit. Meanwhile, Romania’s Orthodox Church also declared support for accession, and other Orthodox hierarchies showed a sympathetic interest.

**Spiritual roots**

The Pope reiterated his vision in a lengthy summer 2003 apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Europa* (“The Church in Europe”), in which he warned Europeans against “living without spiritual roots, like heirs who have squandered a patrimony entrusted to them by history.” But surveys suggested attitudes to faith differed widely around the continent. Although religiousness had increased in Eastern Europe in the years after communist rule — with Lithuania’s 86 seminaries providing a third of all priestly ordinands in Europe — here, too, the situation varied.

When the Pope celebrated his silver jubilee in October 2003, amid mass Polish rejoicing, his place in history as prophet of Europe’s East-West reunification was secure. But with perspectives still divided over the kind of Europe now being worked for, great labors still lay ahead. For all the challenges confronted, new dilemmas were opening up — how to engage in peaceful dialogue with Islam, defend human rights during the “war of terror,” assert social justice in an era of globalization.

In areas like these, Pope John Paul II had laid solid foundations for the Church’s work in the next generation. It is left to his successor to determine the Church’s place in the Europe of the future.

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Jonathan Luxmoore is a frequent correspondent for Our Sunday Visitor. He writes from Poland.

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And the walls came a-tumbling down

“At the moment when the Pope [John Paul II] was elected I think I had, at the most, 20 people that were around me and supported me — and there were 40 million Polish people in the country. However ... a year after [the Pope's] visit to Poland, I had 10 million supporters and suddenly we had so many people willing to join the movement. "I compare this to the miracle of the multiplication of bread in the desert."

— Lech Walesa, a shipyard electrician who founded Poland's Solidarity movement and later serves as the nation's first postcommunist president, in a 2004 speech in Kansas City

"Joseph Stalin once dismissed the Vatican’s influence by asking, ‘How many divisions does the Pope have?’ In the end, that didn't matter. The Pope and two stalwart Western leaders [U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher] helped topple the entire Soviet empire without moving a single division across a border. As Reagan himself said in his 1989 farewell address, ‘Not bad, not bad at all.’"

— From a Wall Street Journal editorial eulogizing President Reagan (June 7, 2004)

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The following are the 104 pastoral visits around the world by Pope John Paul II.

By October 2003 and the celebration of the 25th anniversary of his election, the pontiff had made 143 trips within Italy and nearly 700 within the city and Diocese of Rome, including visits to 301 of the 325 parishes of the diocese of which he was bishop.

1979
Dominican Republic and Mexico, with a stopover in the Bahamas, Jan. 5-Feb. 1
Poland, June 2-10
Ireland and the United States, Sept. 29-Oct. 7
Turkey, Nov. 28-30

1980
Africa (Zaire, the Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ghana, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast), May 2-12
France, May 30-June 2
Brazil (13 cities), June 30-July 12
West Germany, Nov. 15-19

1981
Philippines, Guam and Japan, with stopovers in Pakistan and Alaska, Feb. 16-27

1982
Africa (Nigeria, Benin, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea), Feb. 12-19
Portugal, May 12-15
Great Britain, May 28-June 2
Argentina, with a stopover in Brazil, June 11-12
Switzerland, June 15
San Marino, Aug. 29
Spain, Oct. 31-Nov. 9

1983
Central America (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras) and Haiti, March 2-10
Poland, June 16-23
Lourdes, France, Aug. 14-15
Austria, Sept. 10-13

1984
South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Thailand, May 2-12
Switzerland, June 12-17
Canada, Sept. 9-20
Spain, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, Oct. 10-12

1985
Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Jan. 26-Feb. 6
Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, May 11-21
Africa (Togo, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Zaire, Kenya and Morocco), Aug. 8-19
Liechtenstein, Sept. 8

1986
India, Feb. 1-10
Colombia and Saint Lucia, July 1-7
France, Oct. 4-7
Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Fiji, Singapore and Seychelles), Nov. 19-Dec. 1

1987
Uruguay, Chile and Argentina, March 31-April 13
West Germany, April 30-May 4
Poland, June 8-14
United States and Canada, Sept. 10-20

1988
Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay, May 7-18
Austria, June 23-27
Africa (Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique), Sept. 10-19
France, Oct. 8-11

1989
Madagascar, Reunion, Zambia and Malawi, April 28-May 6
Norway, Iceland, Finland, Denmark and Sweden, June 1-10
Spain, Aug. 19-21
South Korea, Indonesia, East Timor and Mauritius, Oct. 6-16

1990
Africa (Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Burkina Faso), Jan. 25-Feb. 1
Czechoslovakia, April 21-22
Mexico and Curacao, May 6-13
Malta, May 25-27
Africa (Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Ivory Coast), Sept. 1-10

1991
Portugal, May 10-13
Poland, June 1-9
Poland and Hungary, Aug. 13-20
Brazil, Oct. 12-21
John Paul II: Foreign Pastoral Visits

Hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens line the streets of Warsaw near Victory Square in June 1979 to see Pope John Paul II’s motorcade. Poles were ecstatic at the first visit of their beloved Karol Wojtyła as pontiff. CNS FILE PHOTO

1992
Africa (Senegal, Gambia, Guinea), Feb. 19-26
Africa (Angola, São Tomé and Principe), June 4-10
Dominican Republic, Oct. 10-14

1993
Africa (Benin, Uganda, Sudan), Feb. 3-10
Albania, April 25
Spain, June 12-17
Jamaica, Mexico, Denver (United States), Aug. 9-16
Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Sept. 4-10

1994
Zagreb, Croatia, Sept. 10

1995
Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Sri Lanka, Jan. 12-21
Czech Republic and Poland, May 20-22
Belgium, June 3-4
Slovakia, June 30-July 3
Africa (Cameroon, South Africa, Kenya), Sept. 14-20
United Nations and United States, Oct. 4-8

1996
Central America (Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador) and Venezuela, Feb. 5-11
Tunisia, April 17
Slovenia, May 17-19
Germany, June 21-23
Hungary, Sept. 6-7
France, Sept. 19-22

1997
Bosnia-Herzegovina, April 12-13
Czech Republic, April 25-27
Lebanon, May 9-11
Poland, May 31-June 10
France, Aug. 21-24
Brazili, Oct. 2-5

1998
Cuba, Jan. 21-25
Nigeria, March 21-23
Austria, June 19-21
Croatia, Oct. 2-4

1999
Mexico, Jan. 22-25
St. Louis (United States), Jan. 26-27
Romania, May 7-9
Poland, June 5-17
Slovenia, Sept. 19
India, Nov. 5-7
Georgia, Nov. 8-9

2000
Egypt and Mount Sinai, Feb. 24-26
Holy Land, March 20-26
Fátima, Portugal, May 12-13

2001
Greece, Syria and Malta, May 4-9
Ukraine, June 23-27
Kazakhstan and Armenia, Sept. 22-27

2002
Azerbaijan and Bulgaria, May 22-26
Toronto, Canada, July 23-28
Guatemala City, July 31-Aug. 2
Poland, Aug. 16-19

2003
Spain, May 3-4
Croatia, June 5-9
Bosnia-Herzegovina, June 22
Slovak Republic, Sept. 11-14

2004
Switzerland, June 15-6
France, Aug. 14-15

2005

Young descendents of a group of converted headhunters perform a song as Pope John Paul II visits Shillong, India, in February 1986. CNS FILE PHOTO

OUR SUNDAY VISITOR | APRIL 17, 2005
The global Pope’s vision for a new evangelization

John Paul II held a special affection for the continent where Christianity began

By Luke O’Hara

On May 5, 1984, South Korea was under the heel of General Chun Doo Hwan, who had stolen the presidency by military coup, and 1,500 Korea University students were staging a protest against his tyranny.

A far more dynamic demonstration was at Taegu, though, where a half-million people lined the streets to welcome Pope John Paul II, who would ordain 38 young Korean priests that day. Just as the popular Polish pilgrim arrived in town, a bright rainbow haloed the sun, causing a collective gasp to rise from the crowd.

The next day, the Pope canonized 103 Korean martyrs at Yoido Plaza in Seoul in the very first canonization outside of Rome. It was an incredibly special day. Korean Christians, who were celebrating two centuries of Christianity on Korean soil, had their pontiff present and preaching to them in their own language. Their fervor blazed white-hot in the words of Cardinal Stephen Kim, “God wants Korea to evangelize Asia.”

Asia has always been Christian evangelization’s greatest disappointment. Here, on the very continent where Christ was born, is the smallest percentage of Christians. Enter Pope John Paul II proclaiming “Jesus Christ the Savior, who took flesh as an Asian!” Later, in the postsynodal document Ecclesia in Asia (“The Church in Asia”), he would write: “We can pray that in the third millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent.”

Korea wasn’t the only Asian nation he impacted profoundly. This global Pope remade the Philippines, starting with his first Asian pilgrimage in 1981. He made a quick stop in Pakistan to uplift the spirits of 100,000 local Catholics at a stadium in Karachi, braving a road on which a bomb had exploded earlier in the day, and next moved on to the Philippines to uplift the spirit of an entire nation.

Filipino solidarity

In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos had clamped the country under martial law during his controversial administration. The Pope preached to his Filipino flock partly in their native Tagalog and publicly scolded Marcos for denying them their human rights. Afterward, he beatified Filipino layman Lorenzo Ruiz and his companions. Pope John Paul thus lit a fuse to a Catholic revolution whose big bang came in 1986 when Filipinos brought Marcos down with a faith-based movement reminiscent of Solidarity’s defiance of communist rule in Poland.

In Hiroshima, Japan, he preached peace in nine languages, and in Nagasaki he celebrated Mass in Japanese. On Martyrs’ Hill in Nagasaki, where countless Asian and European Catholics had given up their lives for Christ, he said, “They triumphed over death in one unsurpassable act of praise to the Lord.”

Before leaving Nagasaki, he was scheduled to meet the television cameras to say his farewell to Japan. But then there was a snag. According to a Spanish priest assisting the papal party, the Pope “gave priority to the visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel, where he spent some 10 minutes in personal prayer — and everything had to wait.”

One priest who recalled the day was in a corridor when a door opened and Pope John Paul himself came through. After the priest had knelt to kiss the Pontiff’s hand, the Pope likewise knelt and kissed his servant’s hand.

In 1995, again in Manila, the global Pope presided over the largest gathering in human history at World Youth Day. He held the young crowd spellbound. Next, in Papua New Guinea, Pope John Paul preached in Motu and Pidgin and English to 130,000 souls, among them tribesmen in feathered headdresses.

An Asian pilgrim

The Pope frequently sought out the suffering in his 12 Asian visits. At a refugee camp in Thailand, his huge heart visibly wrenched by love, the Vicar of Christ consoled the destitute with hugs, kissing the tops of their heads. To the dying, discarded human beings at Mother Teresa’s hospice in Calcutta, he brought Christ’s personal message, specially delivered to each bed of sorrow, “I love you.”

At the time of the Pope’s first visit to South Korea, there had been about 1.5 million Catholics in the country and a dictator in charge. At his next visit five years later, the country had 1 million more Catholics. By 1998 it would have a democratically elected Catholic president, Kim Dae Jung.

At the end of World War II, only 5 percent of South Koreans had been Christians. At the start of the new century, half of them believed in Christ. Guess who got things rolling?

“With the whole Church, I pray to the Lord to send many more committed laborers to reap the harvest of souls which I see as ready and plentiful,” the Pope had said.

“This vision of a new and promising horizon I see being fulfilled in Asia, where Jesus was born and where Christianity began.”

Pope John Paul II set a high standard of commitment. If only we can follow his lead — that shining trail of courage, faith and unrelenting love — we will surely see that bright horizon.

Luke O’Hara writes from Japan.
AFRICA
Paternal love for a ‘neglected’ continent

Despite its diversity of language and culture, Pope John Paul II visited Africa 10 times and said its people were never far from his heart

By Thomas A. Szyszkieicz

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to many Americans, the continent of Africa is practically a single country, and not thought of very often unless it’s in the context of slavery or famine. But the diversity of its peoples, languages and cultures was not lost on Pope John Paul II.

In his 1995 apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Africa (“The Church in Africa”), which followed the 1994 visit by Pope John Paul to Africa, Pope John Paul quoted the synod fathers who said, “In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected.”

The Pope visited the African continent 10 times, stopping in 35 of 48 mainland nations (not including Madagascar, the Cape Verde or Mascarene Islands). Most of the 13 he missed were either predominantly Muslim or were engaged in civil or cross-border wars.

Heartbreak of war

In fact, the wars in Africa were particularly heartbreaking for Pope John Paul, especially the 1994 civil strife in Rwanda and Burundi. During this bloody conflict between ethnic Hutus and Tutsis resulted in nearly a million deaths. Sadly, many of those involved on both sides were Catholics, with even some priests and nuns being charged with war crimes in the aftermath. One bishop was also arrested but later acquitted.

Sudan would lay heavy on John Paul as well. In 1994, when U.S. Ambassador Raymond Flynn asked the Pope which place on earth touched him the most, the Pope named Sudan. “No rules. No law. Only chaos. Only pain. People suffering, dying, many in Christ’s name. Asked to choose between their faith or food for themselves and their families. And many are choosing their faith. Martyrs, modern martyrs. But no one knows them.”

Without Pope John Paul’s help, the Sudanese plight would not have been kept before the world, according to Bishop Macram Max Gassis. The ordinary of El Obeid in central Sudan has seen his share of suffering in the Nuba Mountains because some of those martyrs of whom the Pope spoke are less well-known.

African saints

Pope John Paul declared 10 Africans blessed (three non-natives) coming from Zaire, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Nigeria and Sudan. Two were later canonized.

One of these, St. Josephine Bakhita, was a Sudanese slave who became a house servant in Italy and eventually became mother superior of a religious house there. And Bishop Daniel Comboni, an Italian, became the apostolic vicar of central Africa and founded two missionary congregations that now bear his name. He died in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and is revered as one of their own. The Comboni sisters and fathers are still doing missionary work there, particularly teaching in schools.

The schools run by the sisters even teach Muslims, Bishop Gassis said, because the Muslim parents trust their daughters to them, something they would not do if men were teaching.

The day after he canonized Bishop Comboni, Pope John Paul II expressed his wish that a Catholic university be established in Khartoum. This is not a new idea, Bishop Gassis said, because it’s been around for 10 years and there is course work offered for computer science. But the Pope saying this gave a bit more impetus and urgency to the project.

Elevation of cardinals

Three residential archbishops from Africa were named as cardinals in the last consistory — Gabriel Zubier Wako of Khartoum, Sudan; Anthony Olumbunni Okogie of Lagos, Nigeria; and Peter Kodwo Apiah Turkson of Cape Coast, Ghana. The number of African cardinals eligible to vote in the conclave is 11.

That any of them were named was a surprise to most cardinal watchers, particularly Cardinal Zubier — except to Bishop Gassis. He had been expecting the archbishop, who is a close friend, to have been named at any of the previous consistory.

One of the 11 cardinals has even at times been considered “papabili,” a possible pope. Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria, head of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, was responsible for the document instituting the “juridical prescriptions” on the Mass which were included in Pope John Paul II’s encyclical, Ecclesia de Eucharistia (“Church of the Eucharist”).

One other African cardinal was particularly high in Church government, helping to name many of the bishops who are currently serving throughout the world. Bernard Gantin of Benin was prefect of the Congregation for Bishops from 1984 to 1998 and a trusted papal adviser.

Hope for the continent

Despite the many difficulties, Pope John Paul was not without hope for Africa. In closing his exhortation on the Church there, he said, “On account of the many difficulties, crises and conflicts which bring about so much suffering and misery on the continent, some Africans are at times tempted to think that the Lord has abandoned them, that He has forgotten them (see Is 49:14). And God answers with the words of the great prophet: Can a woman forget her own baby and not love the child she bore? Even if a mother should forget a child, I will never forget you. I have written your names on the palms of My hands’ (Is 49:15-16).” Yes, on the palms of Christ, pierced by the nails of the Crucifixion. The names of each one of you [Africans] is written there on those palms. Therefore with full confidence we cry out: ‘The Lord is our help and our shield. In Him do our hearts find joy. We trust in His holy name’ (Ps 28:7).

Thomas A. Szyszkieicz writes from Minnesota.
LATIN AMERICA

Some call him the `first Latin American pope`

Pope John Paul II: Impact on World

By Alejandro Bermudez

On Jan. 27, 1979, at the Basilica of Guadalupe, while Pope John Paul II was delivering a historic homily before representatives from all of Latin America, a Peruvian journalist clearly heard Father Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the leaders of liberation theology, moan: "Damn Polish!"

At that point it was clear the then-new Pope was unleashing a revolution in Latin America when he decided to confront the growing influence of liberation theology and offer an alternative. Liberation theology finds its roots in Latin America and uses Gospel messages to promote freeing the poor from oppression — political, social or otherwise.

According to Chilean Catholic intellectual Pedro Morandé, a member of the Pontifical Council for Culture, the change of face of the Church in Latin America "is one of the greatest and yet more understated accomplishments" of this pontificate. "Even Pope John Paul's greatest biographies have missed that particular point," Morandé claimed.

In fact, it was Latin America, and not his beloved Poland, where Pope John Paul chose to start his pilgrimage around the world.

Vision of the revolution

The Pope laid down his vision of the revolution Jan. 28, 1979, during the inauguration in Mexico of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops. "People purport to depict Jesus as a political activist, as a fighter against Roman domination and the authorities, and even as someone involved in the class struggle," he said. "This conception of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subservive of Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis."

After calling bishops to be "teachers of the truth about Jesus Christ, the Church and the human person," the Pope recalled that the mission of Christ "has to do with complete and integral salvation through a love that brings transformation, peace, pardon, and reconciliation. And there can be no doubt that all this imposes exacting demands on the attitude of any Christian who truly wishes to serve the least of their brothers and sisters, the poor, the needy, the marginalized; all those whose lives reflect the suffering countenance of the Lord."

Since then, Pope John Paul traveled to Latin America 25 times, visiting all Latin American countries save for a few Caribbean colonies. In fact, Latin America was a destination in almost a quarter of his trips outside Italy.

Love and justice

The level of comfort the Pope felt in Latin America is clearly portrayed in the way he described a trip to Central America and Venezuela; "I enjoyed the unmistakable atmosphere of human warmth typical of Latin America, an atmosphere which I found at every stage of my journey; festive crowds, including a large number of young people, made every journey a family meeting, indeed, a family feast."

The "feast," nevertheless, did not blind the Pope to what he described as "the millions of the poor in Latin America, crucified because of human injustice." During his numerous visits to Latin America, he confronted various dictatorships, from Rafael Videla's Argentina (1982) and Augusto Pinochet's Chile (1987) to the Sandinistas' Nicaragua (1983) and Fidel Castro's Cuba (1998).

"True to his vision of freedom, he was the first world leader to foresee the consequences of the Berlin Wall's fall for Latin America. "The change of climate occurred to a considerable extent against the background of the events of 1989," the Pope said during a 1996 general audience at the Vatican. "Central America ceased to be a 'shooting range' of influence and conflict between the two 'superpowers' and is living its own history with greater autonomy. In this new situation, the individual countries are called to face urgent problems such as the relationship between capital and labor and the equitable management of goods."

"That is why, in all his dealings with Latin America, Pope John Paul II clearly insisted upon the same ideal: the scandal of injustice in such a deeply Catholic region and the need to close this disconnect."

"Those who say that the Holy Father is progressive in the social and conservative in the doctrine have no idea of the profound coherence of the Pope's thought," said Carlos Corsi Otarola, a Colombian Catholic politician, after one of the Pontiff's visits. "For him, social justice sparks from a converted heart that turns Christian life into daily life."

Duty of bishops

The Pope insisted to Latin American bishops that their role within the Church is the one of preserving and strengthening the faith. During a 2001 audience with the Pontifical Council of Latin America, the pontiff described the bishops' duty as "the effort to preserve, defend and increase the integrity of the faith."

"Your nations need, today as in the past, great evangelizers with the spirit and talent of St. Turibius of Mompox," he said, adding: "He, whom I proclaimed patron of all the bishops of Latin America in 1983, is a genuine example of a pastor whom we can and must imitate in the task of the new evangelization."

Nevertheless, for some critics, "Pope Paul John moved the Church in Latin America backward. "The basic core of this restoration was very clear: It was a return to the Council of Trent that would limit the active participation of the laity and restore full authority to the clergy. The basic goal was the return of clericalism," wrote Belgian-born liberation theologian Joseph Comblin in the July 2, 2003, issue of the National Catholic Reporter. "This is nonsense," responded Alberto Methol Ferre, a Uruguayan Catholic intellectual and diplomat. "No one has done more to bring the Second Vatican Council to life in Latin America. "Liturgy is finding the right balance, lay movements are thriving, vocations are up in almost all countries... you can call that 'the Council of Trent' only if blinded by ideology," he added.

"Moreover, this Pope will be remembered not only as John Paul the Great, but in a sense, probably as the first 'Latin American' pope."

Alejandro Bermudez, a longtime OSV correspondent, directs the ACI Prensa news service in Peru.
A message of hope to a troubled and weary region

Pope was world’s most ardent advocate for peaceful coexistence there among all faiths

By Judith Sudilovsky

Christians in the Holy Land are but a tiny minority within the larger Jewish and Muslim populations, and the influence of a Christian leader here is minimal.

Yet through his words and deeds, Pope John Paul II made a personal impact on the people and leaders of the region. Perhaps more than anything it was the Pope’s own history and experience as a young Polish priest during World War II that gave him a particularly keen interest in the situation in the Holy Land, the cradle of three world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Special memories

Pope John Paul II reserved for himself a special place in the collective memories of this area’s people for being an advocate for peace in this dispute-weary land. He was the driving force behind fundamental agreements the Vatican reached not only with the Israelis (1994) and the Palestinians (2000), but also with Jordanians.

These fundamental agreements established a process by which topics of importance to the Vatican — such as legal status of the Church, religious property rights and financial issues — could be addressed.

His historic 2000 pilgrimage for the jubilee year also bore witness to his desire for people of all faiths to live in the Holy Land in peaceful coexistence.

Three lasting images of this pilgrimage reflected his love for the people and his affective human side. The aging Pope met with Palestinian refugees at the Deheishe refugee camp outside of Bethlehem and greeted Holocaust survivors at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. He also placed a prayerful note in the crevices of the Western Wall. These memories have been eternally engraved in the minds and hearts of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Testimony of faith

In addition, Father David Jaeger, spokesman for the Franciscan Custody, the Mideast Order of Friars Minor who are entrusted by the Vatican to oversee Christian sanctuaries in the Holy Land, said the pilgrimage “was a striking testimony” to the Christian faith affirming that Christianity “is not an idea but an event — the incarnation of God that took place in time and space” in the Holy Land.

The Pope’s love of the land was most purely expressed during this pilgrimage when he urged both the Israelis and Palestinians to understand each others’ sufferings and aspirations, exalting each side toward peace, said Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah.

“What he has done, he has done out of love for the land. He has spoken so many times of peace between Palestinians and Israelis,” said Patriarch Sabbah.

For the local Christians, he added, the Pope’s visit offered strength in their special role in the Holy Land, urging them not to be afraid amid the interreligious tensions.

The Pope also reached out to other Christian churches and religions in the area, said Patriarch Sabbah.

Indeed, the Pope made pilgrimages to other sites in the greater Holy Land, visiting the small Catholic and Christian communities in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Greece. He had even desired to visit Iraq.

Voice of support

Perhaps no pontiff has been regarded with such affection and warmth by the Jewish people as Pope John Paul II.

His active role in bringing Catholics and Jews closer together has indeed made him the “great hero” in this transformation, said Rabbi David Rosen, international director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Rosen said the Pope’s consistent opposition to anti-Semitism, his sensitivity to the impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish psyche, his historic visit to the main synagogue in Rome and his actions in the Holy Land had a “profound impact” on the Jewish-Israeli attitude toward the Church.

The pontiff was also a voice of support for the Christian community in Lebanon at a time when most of the world turned a blind eye to that besieged community. In 1995, the Pope held a special three-week Synod for Lebanon attended by most of the bishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches, all of the patriarchs and some 100 bishops from around the world.

“He was one of the few voices who spoke for the Christians in Lebanon, though he was not listened to much in the West,” said Father David McGarry, director of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem.

The Pope also sent various special emissaries to the region during tense moments — including prior to the 2003 Iraq War and during the 2002 siege of the Church of the Nativity. It was an effort to be a calming factor, if not to actually resolve the conflicts.

Regardless of what Pope John Paul II did or didn’t do in the Middle East, noted Father McGarry, real papal power in the Holy Land is very limited since the Catholic constituency comprises less than 2 percent of the population.

“It is very complicated and naive to think that if the Pope tried harder, he could [have made] a more significant difference,” he said.

But through it all — the writings, entreaties, visits and diplomatic efforts — what stands out most strikingly about Pope John Paul II’s pontificate was, not surprisingly, the man himself.

As Patriarch Sabbah told Our Sunday Visitor, “The Pope’s pontificate was marked for me by his own personality. Especially in these last years, when he was very old and physically worn out. [He] still had the strength to give out messages. This shows that his messages do not come from his physical capacity but from his deep spiritual life.”

He added, “He was a man who knew God in everything he did, and therefore he was sincere in his actions and words. He was like a man who speaks before God — a kind of prophet.”

Judith Sudilovsky writes from Jerusalem.
ON THE RECORD

The papacy of John Paul II by the numbers

A brief statistical look at several milestones reached in the course of his long pontificate

1 billion
Estimated number of people who saw Pope John Paul II in person during his pontificate.

17 million
Estimated number of people whom Pope John Paul II has addressed in his weekly general audiences in St. Peter’s Square.

765,000
Approximate number of miles Pope John Paul has traveled since his election on Oct. 16, 1978.

375,000
Number of people who gathered for a papal Mass in Denver's Cherry Creek State Park for World Youth Day on Aug. 15, 1993.

250,000+
Number of faithful present in St. Peter’s Square at his consecration as pope on Oct. 22, 1978.

1,345

1,500
Approximate number of private audiences involving heads of state and various other groups hosted by Pope John Paul II.

1,150+
General audiences conducted by the Pope.

904
Pages in the official English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, second edition (revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1997)

483
Number of saints he has canonized during his pontificate. This is more than all the popes of the past 500 years combined; his 17 immediate predecessors had named only 302. Some of the better-known saints include St. Maximilian Kolbe (1982), St. Edith Stein (1998), St. Mary Faustina Kowalska (2000), St. Katherine Drechsel (2000), St. Josephine Bakhita (2000), St. Pio de Pietrelcina (2002), St. Juan Diego (2002), St. Josemaria Escriva (2002), St. Daniel Comboni (2003), and St. Gianna Beretta Molla (2004).

262
Number of pontiffs (St. Peter being No. 1) who preceded Karol Wojtyla; Pope John Paul II was the 263rd.

231
Number of cardinals he has created, among the present members of the College of Cardinals who are under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a conclave, there are only three — Cardinals Joseph Ratzinger, William Baum and Jaime Sin — who were named by previous popes (all by Pope Paul VI).

133
Number of countries around the world Pope John Paul II visited as Pope.

104
Number of papal trips he took outside Italy (see map, Pages 16-17). Which pontiff is in second place? Pope Paul VI, who traveled outside Italy just five times.

26
Number of years — along with five months and 17 days — Pope John Paul II occupied the Chair of St. Peter, from Oct. 16, 1978, to April 2, 2005.

14

9
Visit he has made as Pope to his native Poland.

5
Number of meditations on Jesus’ life he has added to the Rosary — the Luminous Mysteries (Jesus’ baptism, His self-revelation at Cana, His...
The Pope’s fervor for the Mother of the Redeemer was, indeed, more than a theology of a Marian Church, although it was that, too. It was personal. It was relational. And it effortlessly acknowledged Mary’s intrinsic role in the history of our salvation — and the modern Church.

Mary’s request, ‘Do whatever He tells you,’ keeps its ever timely value for Christians of every age,” the Pope reflected on the wedding at Cana at a general audience in 1997. “It is an exhortation to trust without hesitation, especially when one does not understand the meaning or benefit of what Christ asks.”

Lifelong trust
Karol Jozef Wojtyla understood well the challenge of living this trust, even in the face of

Totus Tuus
Fervor and devotion to the Mother of God characterized John Paul II’s pontificate

‘I am completely yours!’

By María Ruiz Scaperlanda

‘Totus Tuus’ [‘I am completely yours’]. This phrase is not only an expression of piety [to Mary], or simply an expression of devotion. It is more,” wrote Pope John Paul II in “Crossing the Threshold of Hope” (Knopf, $15) about the words that accompanied his papal coat of arms — a golden crucifix set against a Marian blue backdrop, next to which stands a gold “M,” Mary’s initial.

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Lifelong trust
Karol Jozef Wojtyla understood well the challenge of living this trust, even in the face of
tragedy or political crisis.

At the moment of Karol Wojtyla’s birth on May 18, 1920, Emilia Wojtyla asked the midwife to open the window of their second-floor apartment. “From the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church across the street, hymns in honor of the Virgin Mary flooded the room. It was the month dedicated to Our Lady. You’ll see, my Lolek [Karol Wojtyla’s nickname] will be a great man,” she would tell friends, noted biographer Jo Garcia-Cobb. Lolek learned his first prayers and heard his first cautions of Scripture from her. The first altar he knelt at was the one his mother had arranged in the parlor of their humble apartment.

Pope John Paul fondly recalled the many times that as a child he stopped before the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in his parish church at Wadowice. As a youth, he learned from the Carmelite convent on the hill the rich tradition of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Carmelite scapular. And he credited his pilgrimages with his father to the shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, a Bernardine monastery 20 miles from their hometown, with teaching him how his devotion to Mary was deeply joined to his faith in Christ.

Karol Wojtyla may owe the roots of his Marian devotion to his deeply religious family and to the long history of Marian devotion in his native Poland. But he also acknowledged that it matured during his years as a factory worker during World War II. “At first, it had seemed to me that I should distance myself a bit from the Rosary in the context of my childhood, in order to focus more on Christ,” wrote the Pope. “Yet thanks to the writings of Saint Louis of Montfort,” he added, “I came to understand that devotion to the Mother of God is actually Christocentric, indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.”

**Promotion of devotion**

Following the lead begun at Vatican II, Pope John Paul II took every opportunity to promote devotion to Mary. In general audiences, homilies and encyclicals, he emphasized Mary’s “precise place in the plan of salvation. [The Church] sees Mary maternally present and sharing in the many complicated problems which today beset the lives of individuals, families and nations,” he wrote in his sixth encyclical, Redemptoris Mater (“Mother of the Redeemer”). “She sees her helping the Christian people in the constant struggle between good and evil,” Mary’s title “Mother of the Church,” used frequently by John Paul II, had “profound implications for how the Church is to understand itself,” noted biographer George Weigel in “Witness to Hope” (Harper Collins, $20). Without being divided from it, the “Marian Church” — the Church of disciples — preceded and made possible the “Petrine Church” — the Church of office and authority. Indeed, office in the Church has no other purpose except to form the Church in line with the ideal of sanctity already programmed and prefigured in Mary.” While both complementary, Weigel added, “the Marian profile is pre-eminent and richer in meaning for every Christian’s vocation.”

**His favorite prayer**

Calling the Rosary his favorite prayer, “marvelous in its simplicity and its depth,” John Paul II challenged believers in his apostolic letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae to “rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the Liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives.”

In order to “bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary,” the Pope announced a new set of mysteries focused on Christ’s public ministry: the luminous mysteries. “No one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of His mystery better than His Mother,” wrote the Pope in October 2002, the beginning of the 25th year of his pontificate. “Contemplating the mysteries of devotion with Mary is a means of learning from her to ‘read’ Christ . . . and to understand His message.”

On May 13, 1981, when would-be assassin Mehmet Ali Agca shot the Pope during an open-air audience at St. Peter’s Square, John Paul II firmly believed that Mary was needed to save his life. The first two shots hit pilgrims but missed the Pope, who had bent down to hug a young girl who seemed to be wearing an image of Our Lady of Fatima. The next shot hit the Pope in the abdomen, causing major injuries. John Paul II showed no interest in the mystery surrounding his shooting — numerous conspiracy theories and contradictory confessions by the shooter — biographer Garcia-Cobb noted. His interest centered not in who was behind the plot to end his life, but in who saved his life and why. “The Pope became convinced that divine intervention, through the Lady of Fatima, saved his life. The shooting occurred on the feast day of the Lady, who is believed to have appeared to three Portuguese children in 1917 in a series of six apparitions. The Pope was shot at 5:19 p.m., the exact time of day he was elected pope in 1978.” Quoting the Pope, Garcia-Cobb noted, “One hand fired, and another guided the bullet.”

Enthrusting himself — and each of us — to our Heavenly Mother was an intimate and completely natural act for John Paul II. “Be our Mother. Share with us your limitless faith,” wrote the Pope in one of his many prayers to Mary. “Take and keep within your protective arms a world that has largely lost faith and abandoned hope.”

Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, a regular contributor to OSV, is the author of “The Seeker’s Guide to Mary” (Loyola, $11.95).

**A man of prayer**

_by Theresa Carson_

Pope John Paul II left us an example by which to live, with prayer as a cornerstone. His life belonged to God. Through his life’s trials — losing his mother and only brother as a child, standing up to the Nazis in his youth, having courage to follow his calling in the face of communism, facing health problems during his vigorous papacy and forgiving his would-be assassin — he relied on God always. With strength obtained from prayer, he profoundly acted in this world without being of it.

How should we pray? Although the flesh is no longer with us, we still find the pontiff’s spirit in his plethora of apostolic exhortations, apostolic letters, audiances, encyclicals, homilies and speeches. Conversations with God inspired each one. Prayer is simply a conversation with God, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Prayer is the first verification that man is a religious being, capable of putting himself in contact with God.” Through that contact, the world is transformed.

In “Go in Peace” (Loyola, $19.95), a collection of his prayers, the Pope wrote: “Prayer, through the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes the ever more mature expression of the new human, who by means of this prayer participates in the divine life.”

“What we need to foster, in ourselves and in others, is a contemplative outlook . . . the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality, but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the Creator and seeing in every person their own living image.”

In “Crossing the Threshold of Hope” (Knopf, $15), the Holy Father said that prayer is making God present in the world. “Prayer is a search for God, but it is also a revelation of God. It is necessary “for the world and for the Church because in the end it constitutes the easiest way of making God and His redeeming love present in the world.”

What better example of this statement than the Pope himself. During his papacy, he celebrated several World Youth Days, made 104 apostolic visits outside Italy and 143 within, met with more than 17 million pilgrims at general audiences and regularly presided over the Day of Prayer for Peace in the World at Assisi.

He told us: “Prayer is not simply one occupation among many, but is at the center of our life in Christ. It turns our attention away from ourselves and directs it to the Lord. Prayer fills the mind with truth and gives hope to the heart.”

Perhaps the greatest prayer Pope John Paul II left us is his example, the life he led in which he allowed the Holy Spirit to direct him. To meditate on the great man’s life, upon his strength, upon his wisdom and obedience to God’s will, is to reflect upon holiness.

Theresa Carson writes from Florida.
‘New feminism’ concept upheld dignity of women

By Pia de Solenni

John Paul II’s understanding of female genius is one of the most pro-woman views to date.

Paul VI closed the Second Vatican Council in 1965 observing that the role of women was changing and with it came a tremendous challenge: “Women of the entire universe, whether Christian or nonbelieving, you to whom life is entrusted at this grave moment in history, it is for you to save the peace of the world.”

Believe it or not, this was too dynamic for most of the feminists of the time. They claimed to have liberated women from various bonds and entrapments. But Paul VI was calling for a radical realization of the feminine genius. Perhaps without realizing it, feminist theorists had confined woman’s role, expressing it almost exclusively in masculine terms and making woman more of an object than she ever before. Paul VI’s vision would unfold in countless ways, more than ever could be contained within the strict boundaries of traditional feminism.

John Paul II followed this lead throughout his pontificate and aggressively challenged feminist and nonfeminist notions of woman: “Do not be afraid...of being women! We [society] have been liberated from the box of so-called feminism.”

He spoke to all women and men, not just career women, or mothers, or even working moms. Nor did he assert the superiority of either sex. Instead, he situated his radicalism in his moderation.

Beginning with the immediate biological differences between men and women, he explained how the sexual urge makes clear a type of complementarity, reaching beyond the body to include the entire person: body and soul.

John Paul II emphasized that man and woman are made in the image of God, not only to exist together, but to live for each other, to form a union integrating what is masculine and what is feminine. Although the spousal relationship manifests this in a special way, all relationships involve the gift of self between persons because all relationships involve a union of two selves, two gifts of the self. We give more or less according to the type of relation.

To women in particular, John Paul II attributed the feminine response, “a true resonance of mind and heart, a response of faith.” In this way, woman’s mind becomes a paradigm and her vision becomes an insight to knowing God in a unique way.

Mary, the woman at the well and the other Gospel women showed best how to respond to Jesus. Given their consistent but varied responses, these women were able to enhance themselves and those with whom they shared relationships.

Theology of the body

Both men and women are equally the image and likeness of God. But the idea of “vocation” or how we are called to live accounts for their diversity. Woman has a particular role as “living subject and irreplaceable witness.”

No human person can exist without being a man or a woman. Every human person, as a particular man or woman, is called to be part of the Church, which is the Bride of Christ. From this consideration, John Paul II established that an intrinsic part of the feminine vocation contributes to the essentially human experience of being in the Church.

Rather than overspiritualize the human person, John Paul II insisted that the body plays an intrinsic role in human nature. Knowing is the characteristic human activity. Referring to the union of man and woman as husband and wife, John Paul II pointed out that this union is a type of knowledge. It is a knowledge which is reciprocal, “in which man and woman participate by means of their body and their sex.” Being a man or a woman affects all of our knowledge, even the most intimate knowledge of ourselves and another because our sex determines how we experience and come to know.

Thus, John Paul II was able to explain the mystery of how man and woman can be equal but different, different but complementary. Their differences are based on their equality as members of the body of Christ.

Complementarity

When thinking of feminist leaders most of us don’t think of John Paul II, but his understanding is one of the most pro-woman views to date. Janet Smith, professor of ethics at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Mich., explains, “Pope John Paul II's writings on the relations between male and female are truly extraordinary for the depth of understanding they exhibit of the different physiological, sexual and psycho-sexual responses of male and female.”

He recognized the differences and did not try to make woman into a man. Her differences are not her imperfection, but her glory. Woman does not rival man. Man does not overshadow woman. They are equal and, through their differences, they are able to help each other grow in perfection.

Instead of allowing the differences to separate and divide woman from man, John Paul II united them without degrading woman, exalting both man and woman.

John Paul II reminded us of the particular gift and relevance of the feminine vision. Although there are as many ways of being a woman as there are women, his understanding applies to each of us. None of us will be exactly alike. We will find our own words and ways to tell our own stories — but they will be the stories of women, not of people who have had to deny the core of their identity. John Paul II gave us the tools to fulfill the vision of Paul VI.

Further reading on Pope John Paul II’s vision for women and the world

- “Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women,” 1995, (Given on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference of Women, Beijing.)

The text of papal documents and addresses can be found on the Internet at www.vatican.va. Publications from the USCCB can be ordered at (800) 235-8722. These publications are also available from Catholic and secular book retailers.
THE POPE WITH THAT ‘ROCK-STAR’ APPEAL TO THE YOUNG

The bond John Paul II had with young people was unparalleled and did much to spark a new generation of believers

By Tom Tracy

In February 2002, an 81-year-old John Paul II, suffering from a host of ailments, made his annual visit to the Roman Major Seminary. With a few friends accompanying him, the Pope stayed for supper, which was followed by a musical performance recalling the life of Pope John XXIII written by a young Italian priest, Father Marco Frisina, who has been described as “the Pope’s composer.” Later that night, the Pope met with Father Frisina and thanked him profusely for his composition.

“John Paul II had the gift of appreciating beauty — art and music for its own sake,” said Father Thomas Rosica, pastor of the Newman Centre Catholic Mission at the University of Toronto, Canada.

Father Rosica, who accompanied the Pope to the musical performance that night in Rome, was CEO and national director of World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto. He met with the Pope regularly in the year leading up to the international youth gathering in Canada and saw firsthand the Pope’s own “youthfulness.”

It was precisely John Paul II’s background as a man who loved the arts, who was a playwright, a poet, a dreamer in the best sense of the word that set the stage for his own priesthood and pontifical life. “He knew this as a philosopher, but he knew it first as a pastor. He then brought that understanding to the world as Bishop of Rome.”

World Youth Day

The first World Youth Day was held March 23, 1986, in Rome. The second was held April 11-12, 1987, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Other host cities have included Santiago de Compostela, Spain; Częstochowa, Poland; Denver; Manila; Paris and Toronto.

The Pope showed a great personal interest in WYD planning during the more than 12 times the two men met leading up to that summer event.

“The Pope showed a great personal interest in WYD planning during the more than 12 times the two men met leading up to that summer event.”

Nick Huck, then a student at the University of Richmond, Va., and a member of the Young Adult Advisory Board at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, first experienced the Pope up close at World Youth Day in Rome 2000. Huck was 10 feet from the Holy Father when he passed by at the opening ceremony in St. Peter’s Square.

“I am also amazed at how much hope and faith he put in us — he really believes in [the] youth,” Huck said of the Pope after that memorable day. “He had a true power that showed in his energy, “Sister Walsh recalled,”a moment of ‘skin-tingling energy,’ Huck said.

“Pope Paul II was also a poet in a sense such as to say that the young are not just a group of people, but they are a creative force. He knew this and the Pope knew this.”

Other of the organizers also noticed the impact that young people had on the Pope.

Mary Ann Walsh, 31, a laywoman and Vatican correspondent for OSV.


Relating to the young as ‘moral actors’

Papal biographer George Weigel, a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, notes that Pope John Paul II’s writings revealed his appreciation for youth came from a belief in that crucial juncture in life during which identity and vocation are forming and when life-changing decisions are made.

The Pope believed that in the unfolding of those early decisions, “young people discover themselves as moral actors, face the question of their destiny” and form their conscience — the true measure of human dignity, wrote Weigel.

“I think it was his particular experience as student chaplain that gave him this special ‘feel’ for young people,” Weigel told Our Sunday Visitor. “Wojtyla has long thought that all life has a dramatic structure, and the youthful years of maturation and vocational clarification are a particularly dramatic part of the drama, so to speak. He knew this as a philosopher, but he knew it first as a pastor. He then brought that understanding to the world as Bishop of Rome.”

Notable impact

Mercy Sister Mary Ann Walsh, director of the communications office for the U.S. bishops and an organizer for the 1993 World Youth Day in Denver, said she and other of the organizers also noticed the impact that young people had on the Pope.

“We invented a new verb, ‘youthens,’ because when we watched the Pope meet with young people he seemed to grow younger before our eyes,” Sister Walsh said. She saw the same phenomenon during the Pope’s 1999 meeting with young people during his brief stop in St. Louis, Mo., where he joined an evening rally at the Trans World Dome. It was a moment of “skin-tingling energy,” Sister Walsh recalled, “a total-body-soul experience invigorating everyone there.”

John Paul II is probably the only world leader who has ever called youth together on the scale of the WYD events, she added.

Tom Tracy is a senior correspondent for OSV.
At his heart, the Holy Father was a family man

He championed conventional households when society denigrated traditional values

**By Woodeene Koenig-Bricker**

From the opening days of his pontificate, when he was pictured cuddling babies, to the day of his famed assassination attempt — when his life was spared in part because he bent down to speak to a little girl — to some of his final pictures showing him shooing a dove from the papal apartments flanked by a young boy and girl, Pope John Paul II exemplified the Gospel admonition to “bring the little children unto me.”

And not just children, but mothers and fathers and grandparents and whole families.

**Heart of the man**

While his reign was marked with numerous impressive political achievements including the defeat of Marxist communism, and spiritual achievements including his ceaseless battle against the secular consumerism of Western society, the true heart of the man may be revealed most tellingly in his extensive writings — and dealings — with families.

For this Pope, family life lay at the center of spiritual life. As he said in his “Letter to Families,” “The history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family.”

Three themes centering on families consistently appeared in his speeches and writings.

**Domestic church**

First, through the sacrament of marriages, families become what he, echoing the words of Vatican II, frequently referred to as the “domestic church.”

“Marriage is an act of will that signifies and involves a mutual gift, which unites the spouses and binds them to their eventual souls, with whom they make up a sole family — a domestic church,” he explained.

Throughout his reign, the Pope stressed that the concept of family as church requires a new examination of the spirituality of fatherhood and motherhood.

“Greater pastoral attention must be given to the role of men as husbands and fathers, as well as to the responsibility which they share with their wives for their marriage, the family and the raising of their children. Also required is a serious preparation of young people for marriage, one which clearly presents Catholic teaching on this sacrament at the theological, anthropological and spiritual level,” he said in his post-synodal apostolic letter, *Ecclesia in America* (“The Church in America”).

**Bulwark of faith**

The concept of family as domestic church, the crucible in which virtue is discovered and refined, led to his second theme, the importance of families as the first bulwark against the culture of death. It is within the family that threats from a culture that does not respect life from the moment of conception to the point of natural death are the most apparent.

“The family is placed at the centre of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. To the family is entrusted the task of striving, first and foremost, to unleash the forces of good, the source of which is found in Christ the Redeemer of man,” he said in his “Letter to Families.”

**Strong marriages**

His third major theme was integrally tied to his theology of the body and the inherent dignity of all humans. Emphasizing that Jesus himself was born into and nurtured by a human family, he continually stressed the need for strong marriages in which husband and wife respect and build up each other through their continual openness to the gift of new life. This is the “fundamental role which the family is called upon to play.”

He went on to explain: “In this sanctuary life is born and is welcomed as God’s gift. The word of God, faithfully read in the family, gradually builds it up as a Domestic Church and makes it fruitful in human and Christian virtues; it is there that the source of vocations is to be found.”

Because of the essential role of the family, Pope John Paul II stressed the need to safeguard the holiness of marriage and the family, often saying that only when the family is defended can the full truth about the human person be revealed and the dignity of each individual be fully respected.

**God’s strength suffices**

While Pope John Paul II presented an ideal of family life to which he encouraged all families to strive, he was also pragmatic and realistic in his assessment of the challenges.

“Love is demanding,” he said in his “Letter to Families.” He went on: “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.”

Nevertheless, he encouraged families to remain true to their vocation, “Do not be afraid of the risks! God’s strength is always far more powerful than your difficulties!”

When history assesses the impact of Pope John Paul II, his emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of families will undoubtedly be one of his greatest legacies. As he said to the London Observer on Dec. 7, 1986, “As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live.”

His words, prophetic for their time, continue to inspire and challenge us in the third millennium.

Woodeene Koenig-Bricker edits OSV’s Catholic Parent magazine.
**BLESSED SACRAMENT**

**Prescription for Church: ‘Eucharistic amazement’**

In declaring the Year of the Eucharist, Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of encountering Christ at the altar and tabernacle

By Paul Thigpen

**“Eucharistic worship,” Pope John Paul II insisted, “constitutes the soul of all Christian life.” Yet when he examined his worldwide flock, what he saw troubled him deeply: Countless Catholics seemed to have forgotten that soul, or misconstrued it, or lost it altogether.**

They needed to recover an appreciation, he concluded, for this “most precious possession which the Church can have in her journey through history.” They needed to experience what he called “eucharistic amazement”—an astonishment at encountering Jesus in the power of His paschal mystery, “concentrated” in the Eucharist and transported to us across the centuries.

**A continuing theme**

Gripped by this amazement himself, John Paul set a pastoral priority to share it. In addition to frequent preaching about the Eucharist, he wrote tens of thousands of words—most notably, his early apostolic exhortation “On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist” (1980), and toward the end of his pontificate, the encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia (“Church of the Eucharist”) (2003). For an introduction to John Paul’s understanding of the Eucharist, we do well to look more closely at this latter text—the rich, ripened fruit of a lifelong meditation on the Blessed Sacrament.

After stating his intention to “rekindle … eucharistic amazement,” in this document John Paul first reviewed the Church’s age-old teaching. He reaffirmed the insights of the Fathers, the Council of Trent and the relevant encyclicals of earlier popes. Then he fleshed out the oft-quoted Vatican II statement that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”

The most familiar traditional themes are here: the Eucharist as spiritual food, channel of the Holy Spirit, pledge of future glory, unifying power within the Church. John Paul also warmly recommended eucharistic adoration outside the Mass, “which prolongs and increases the fruits of our communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord” (No. 25). Yet he explored as well certain connections between the Eucharist and other spiritual realities that he believed merit “greater attention” from the Church: “The Eucharist expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in heaven,” that is, with the angels and saints (No. 19).

Chief among these, of course, is Our Lady. “If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united,” he reasoned, “the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist” (No. 57).

The Eucharist should also be understood more fully, John Paul insisted, in its relationship to the world beyond the Church. From it “the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission”; it is “the source and the summit of all evangelization” as she preaches the gospel (No. 22).

At the same time, the Eucharist “plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us,” urging us to “the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God’s plan” (No. 20).

**Medicine for the Church**

Having offered a vision of eucharistic glories, John Paul went on to deal with their practical implications for the life of the Church.

He noted that in recent times several “positive signs of eucharistic faith and love” have appeared: “a more conscious, active and fruitful participation” by the faithful at Mass; more widespread eucharistic adoration; and a greater involvement in Corpus Christi celebrations.

Nevertheless, “alongside these lights, there are also shadows” (No. 10). John Paul identified several symptoms of spiritual illness in the Church whose cure lies in the recovery of a true understanding of the Eucharist. These included theological confusion, blurring of clerical and lay distinctions, misguided ecumenical efforts, loss of focus among priests, reception of the Eucharist without the proper moral disposition, neglect of the Sunday obligation and loss of dignity in worship (see sidebar).

To help the Church recover her spiritual health as a eucharistic people, John Paul declared an unprecedented Year of the Eucharist to be observed worldwide from October 2004 through October 2005. His 2004 apostolic letter Mane Nobiscum Domine (“Stay With Us, Lord”) helped Catholics grasp the spiritual significance of the year and offered guidelines for its celebration.

**An ineffable mystery**

Despite all he had to say about the Eucharist, from the very beginning of his pontificate, John Paul had admitted that ultimately, “the Eucharist is the ineffable sacrament.” As he had explained in his first encyclical, Redemptor Hominis (“The Redeemer of Man”), our understanding of this mystery—despite years of reflection—“still reaches no more than the threshold” (No. 20).

Even so, through his persistent and profound teachings on this theme, John Paul pressed the Church toward a more startling communion with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. No doubt even now he prays for us, asking God to rekindle in our hearts a “eucharistic amazement.”

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**A papal diagnosis: What ails the Church?**

Here are the seven signs of spiritual illness that Pope John Paul II said necessitated a recovery of a true understanding of the Eucharist, according to his 2003 encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia (“Church of the Eucharist”):

- **Theological confusion:** All too often, “an extremely reductive understanding of the eucharistic mystery” leaves it “striped of its sacrificial meaning,” so that the Eucharist “is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet” (No. 10). To end the confusion, we must rediscover “the reality of the Eucharist as sacrifice.”

- **Blurring of clergy/lay distinctions:** The Eucharist is “apostolic,” coming down to us from Christ through the apostles and their successors, the bishops and the priests they ordain. We must reaffirm the unique role of ministerial priests and the dependence of the local assembly on their eucharistic ministry. Lay people should not assume for themselves the liturgical words and actions reserved to the priest (No. 28).

- **Misguided ecumenical efforts:** For Catholics, to distribute the Eucharist to non-Catholics, to receive the communion of “separated brethren” or to substitute ecumenical services for the Mass is to bear false witness. The truth about the Eucharist requires that we avoid actions that proclaim an ecumenical unity not yet existing or imply an equivalence between the Eucharist and the communion rites of other Christian traditions (No. 30, 38-40).

- **Loss of focus among priests:** Because the Eucharist is the “principal and central” reason for existence of the priesthood, for priests to neglect eucharistic ministry for the sake of other activities is to lose their vocational identity (No. 31).

- **Reception of the Eucharist without the proper moral disposition:** Recognizing the holiness of the Eucharist leads us to make sure we approach it with a clear conscience, having received the graces of sacramental penance when necessary. It also guides priests to refuse the sacrament to those who “obstinately persist in manifest grave sin” (No. 37).

- **Neglect of the Sunday obligation:** If we understand why we need the Eucharist and how it builds communion in the Church, we will be faithful in attending Mass on Sundays.

- **Loss of dignity in worship:** If we genuinely grasp the significance of the Eucharist, we will make sure that the outward forms of our worship — art, architecture, music, vestments — “evolve and emphasize the grandeur of the event being celebrated” (No. 49). We will avoid “unauthorized innovations,” faithfully observing the liturgical norms for the Eucharist (No. 52).

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*Paul Thigpen is the editor of The Catholic Answer.*
ECUMENISM

Relationships with other churches a balancing act

Pope was committed to the desire of Christ that his disciples ‘may all be one’ in Him

By Thomas A. Szyszkielewicz

E cumenical advances were made under Pope John Paul II, but how you define that progress depends on whom you ask.

For those engaged in the more common approach, where dialogues with various churches take place on different issues of disagreement and attempt to come to some agreement on the issue, the Pope’s greatest achievement was the 1999 signing of the Catholic-Lutheran Joint Statement on Justification.

Father Anthony Kennedy, director of the Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Asumptionist Father Georges Tavard, who has been in ecumenical work since the time of Blessed John XXIII, agreed that this statement marked an epoch in Catholic-Protestant relations since this was the fundamental issue at the beginning of the Reformation. It was the “first ecumenical document the Catholic Church has received officially” Father Kennedy said.

This statement has allowed for further progress with other denominations, including the World Methodist Council, according to Father Kennedy. The USCCB is using the text as a kind of “platform” for dialogue with the Reformed churches and even with evangelicals, he said.

Unofficial dialogue

This same kind of approach is happening even on unofficial levels. The differences between the participants were clearly influenced by John Paul. “One of the singular accomplishments of John Paul II is that he became such a stalwart defender of biblical truth in the world,” Chuck Colson, chairman of Prison Fellowship, told OSV. “I think you’re seeing a lot of progress being made [on ecumenism]. Without this Pope’s stand, this wouldn’t have happened.”

The dialogue Colson participates in is called “Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” which includes such Catholic luminaries as Father Richard John Neuhaus and Cardinal Avery Dulles. In fact, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, the former head of the ecumenical dicastery in Rome, even came to a few of their regular sessions.

No compromise

But others look at ecumenism — and the Pope’s contributions to it — in a different light. The problem with the usual dialogue approach, they say, is twofold — it can appear as though compromises are needed in order to make progress and it does not necessarily change the hearts of ordinary believers.

But compromise cannot be accepted when the documents of the Second Vatican Council state that, through God’s mysterious design and mercy, the fullness of the Christian mystery resides within the Catholic Church.

The tension presented in Vatican II’s documents between acknowledging the truth present in other churches and the Church’s self-identity is something John Paul maintained in his papacy, David Mills believes.

Mills, the editor of Touchstone, a magazine of ecumenical affairs, sees this in the issuance of the encyclical Ut Unim Sint (“That All May Be One”), which discussed ecumenical relations and the later issuance of Dominus Iesus (“The Lord Jesus”). That letter, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, stated clearly that the Catholic Church teaches the fullness of truth on the Lord Jesus.

Dominus Iesus caused an uproar in many places, even among Catholic scholars. Others, like evangelical scholar Timothy George, praised the document for its forthrightness.

Prophetic teaching

In this vein, Mills believes John Paul’s greatest achievement was teaching the truth of the Catholic Church in a new and powerful way. “Through the Catechism of the Catholic Church and his own teaching, John Paul] re-presented the Catholic mind in a prophetic and insightful way that other Christians find appealing,” Mills said.

This has brought about a “sea change” in the Protestant world because, according to Mills, many conservative Protestants “now look to John Paul and the Catholic Church as real authorities.” So real, in fact, that some Protestant teachers are even looking to papal encyclicals for help in understanding the truth of any topic they might be teaching on. Indeed, Colson called Veritatis Splendor (“The Splendor of Truth”) “the greatest exposition on truth ever written.”

In the trenches

So it appears that John Paul also dealt with the problem of the conversion of hearts. Because he took on so much of the secular culture in his preaching and teaching, many Christians have gotten together in what George has dubbed “the ecumenism of the trenches.”

Ecumenism, said Marcellino D’Ambrosio, a Catholic biblical scholar, has to happen on the level of personal relationships and through Catholics coming to “conversion to a deeper holding of what we say we hold” or what Father Kennedy called “spiritual ecumenism.”

Without this conversion and without regular prayer for the reconciliation of the Church, D’Ambrosio said this aspect of Vatican II will remain unfilled. If this isn’t accomplished, he said, “We’re not being faithful to John Paul and were not being faithful to the Council.”

He knew beauty in art when he saw it

I put down my brush filled with oil paint to take up a tool of Pope John Paul II, the pen. In this time of closing, it is also our opportunity to give tribute to his “Letter to Artists” in 1999 inviting us to rise to the true beauty of our craft, the artistic vocation.

Karol Wojtyla spoke to us from his own experience and love of the arts. Actor, poet and author, he knew the efficacy of these art forms to communicate the Word of God and the truth about life. Throughout his student years, Wojtyla joined in numerous theatrical performances and poetry recitals, and in his early 20s he began writing plays interweaving biblical themes and contemporary narratives.

When he entered the papacy, his pen fused all his artistic and priestly experiences into the many documents and letters we now have as his gift to us. But I believe his creativity and his awareness of the power of the arts continued to reveal itself in his pilgrimages to many lands.

His visits of papal blessing became festivals of dance, music, poetry and color bursting from the rich heritages of each culture into a celebration of joy. Why? In his presence full with the Holy Spirit, our hearts overflowed and we created expressions to celebrate faith, life itself and the love of God we experienced through Pope John Paul.

This is the essence of the arts and creativity which he himself exhorts us to meet, to express in the arts the great human drama reflecting our divine Creator whose love and being overflowed into the creation of humankind, the earth and all that it contains.

Before the sacredness of life at this poignant time of history, the Pope’s death urgently beseeches us to gather up the fragments of our culture. His holiness has appealed to us as Christian artists to enter the mystery of the Incarnate God and the mystery of our lives revealed by Christ.

Our task is to shed light upon our path and destiny, to bear witness through art and in art that in Christ the human person and all of creation is redeemed (No. 14).

— Donna Surprenant is a member of the Madonna House Apostolate in Combermere, Ontario, where she lives as a full-time painter of still lifes and figure compositions.
LIFE ISSUES

John Paul II: The faithful ‘apostle of life’

He was uncompromising in defending Church teaching on abortion, euthanasia and others

By John M. Haas

Pope John Paul II could well be called the “apostle of life.” He spent his entire pontificate boldly proclaiming the inviolability of innocent human life.

On his first pastoral visit to the United States, he stood on the mall in Washington, D.C. He stood amid the symbols of U.S. institutional power and he called on all Americans “to stand up for life.” Throughout his reign, the Pope never hesitated to declare the right to life in the presence of heads of state, power brokers and arbiters of national social policy.

When it came to the life issues, this Pope was best known for his powerful 1995 encyclical Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life”). Pope John Paul II spoke of “atrocious crimes” and “murderous violence” in contemporary societies. He said that those who would choose abortion have an attitude that “is shameful and utterly reprehensible.”

Societal barbarism

What is distinctive about the Pope’s teachings on the life issues, however, is that they do not deal simply with personal morality. They are always placed in a cultural context. Above all else, “The Gospel of Life” is a penetrating analysis and critique of contemporary “advanced” societies.

In the encyclical, the Pope spoke of “attacks,” affecting life in its earliest and in its final stages, attacks that … raise questions of extraordinary seriousness. It is not only that … these attacks tend no longer to be considered as ‘crimes’; paradoxically, they assume the nature of rights, to the point that the state is called upon to give them legal recognition and to make them available through the free services of health-care personnel.” He says we have come “to interpret … crimes against life as legitimate expressions of individual freedom, to be acknowledged and protected as actual rights.”

The cultural decline, the loss of social protections for innocent life, are what seemed to baffle and Puzzle the Pope above all else. “How did such a situation come about?” he asked. “In the background there is the profound crisis of culture, that generates skepticism in relation to the very foundations of knowledge and ethics, and that makes it increasingly difficult to grasp clearly the meaning of what man is, the meaning of his rights and duties.”

The Pope saw civilization itself faced with the danger of its own self-destruction. He writes elsewhere that “we are facing an immense threat to life: not only to the life of individuals, but, also, to that of civilization itself.”

Pope John Paul II told us that nations once considered civilized, are reverting “to a state of barbarism.” Whenever we see legally sanctioned abortion we are dealing with a “tyrant state” engaging in “a tragic caricature of legality” through such actions as Supreme Court rulings. These developments, the Pope told us, have “a perverse and evil significance” as we suffer “the most alarming corruption and the darkest moral blindness.” The Pope’s words were not hyperbolic. Since the Supreme Court ruling of Roe v. Wade in 1973, more than 43 million children have died from abortion.

Serious threats

The problem, of course, is that the social threat to innocent human life is not fundamentally a political or juridical problem at all. It is, as the Pope showed us, a cultural problem.

Years ago when the Pope visited Los Angeles, he gave a description of culture as “all those things that reflect the soul of a nation.” He asked, “How is American culture evolving today? … You mean your poetry and art, your drama, your painting and sculpture, the literature that you are producing — are all those things that reflect the soul of a nation being influenced by the spirit of Christ for the perfection of humanity?”

A nation’s culture reflects its deepest beliefs. And it is fundamentally religion that gives rise to culture.

A lost soul

Our nation had always afforded protection to the vulnerable in our midst because we cherished each individual human life. Unborn children were protected by law because we cherished children.

Infanticide and euthanasia were unspeakable — indeed, unthinkable. There was an underlying respect and love for human life that came to be reflected in the law. This love and respect did not arise from the law, however. Its roots were much, much deeper.

Our nation in its origins was Christian, a fact the Pope acknowledged repeatedly during his second pastoral visit to the United States. We afforded profound respect to human beings because we believed each person was the very image and likeness of God himself.

In “The Gospel of Life,” the Pope reminded us that the Incarnation “reveals to humanity not only the boundless love of God who ‘so loved the world that He gave His only Son’ (Jn 3:16), but also the incomparable value of every human person.”

The dignity of every person can be seen in the fact that each is the image and likeness of God and each has been redeemed “at a great price” by Jesus Christ. It is this profound religious insight that gave rise to the reverence shown the innocent in the laws of our nation.

Pope John Paul II taught us that the most fundamental place to begin to restore legal safeguards to human life is in deepening the religious beliefs of our people, and that God is the ultimate source of the dignity of the human person.

Obstacles and guides to life-friendly laws

“The Church well knows that it is difficult to mount an effective legal defense of life in pluralistic democracies, because of the presence of strong cultural currents with differing outlooks.

“At the same time, certain that moral truth cannot fail to make its presence deeply felt in every conscience, the Church encourages political leaders, starting with those who are Christians, not to give in, but to make those choices which, taking into account what is realistically attainable, will lead to the re-establishment of a just order in the defense and promotion of the value of life.

“Here it must be noted that it is not enough to remove unjust laws. The underlying causes of attacks on life have to be eliminated, especially by ensuring proper support for families and motherhood.

“A family policy must be the basis and driving force of all social policies. For this reason there need to be set in place social and political initiatives capable of guaranteeing conditions of true freedom of choice in matters of parenthood. It is also necessary to rethink labor, urban, residential and social service policies so as to harmonize working schedules with time available for the family, so that it becomes effectively possible to take care of children and the elderly."

— Excerpted from Evangelium Vitae (“The Gospel of Life”)

A sense of the sacred

Following the teachings and example of Pope John Paul II, there is absolutely nothing more important that our bishops and priests can do to restore a sense of the sacredness of human life than to celebrate Mass with devotion and reverence and to offer this greatest of all prayers for the protection of innocent life.

The Pope taught us the Eucharist is the infinite gift of love. If we can instill once again, in the people of God, a sense of wonder and awe in the presence of Jesus Christ in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, then we shall begin to see a culture of death begin to crumble, and we will witness the emergence of a culture of life and a civilization of love.

John Haas is the president of The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Boston and former John Cardinal Krol Professor of Moral Theology at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. This article is adapted from The Priest magazine.
A reluctant farewell to the Pope who knew no fear

John Paul II gave many gifts to the Church and to the world, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

How we will miss this Pope! Although it will be right and good when we acclaim the Church’s newest pontiff after his election by the College of Cardinals, for so many of us, right now, it is hard to imagine a world in which John Paul II will no longer be the pre-eminent moral force and spiritual leader for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Many of us remember when the newly elected and relatively unknown Karol Wojtyla of Poland stood on the balcony overlooking St. Peter’s Square in 1978 and told us, “Do not be afraid!”

He spoke with the confidence of a man who had overcome many trials—the loss of his family, his nation’s invasion by the Nazis, communist rule—and who truly believed the rest of that famous opening statement of his papal ministry: “Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To His saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and human history. And political systems, the vast boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and human history. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid!”

As a willling pope

“Open” is a word that sums up so much of what we anticipated about Pope John Paul. It characterizes his restless intellectual vigor, his love of people, his willingness to go anywhere and meet anyone—even his own would-be assassin.

John Paul II exhibited an openness that was a lesson to his more anxious co-religionists. This Pope never appeared fearful, exhibiting only a serene confidence that Christ is the center of human civilization and human history, and that our responsibility as Christians is to engage the world, bearing witness to our faith in Christ.

When we think of some of the most powerful images of his papacy, we sense this openness: Kissing the soil of 133 countries. Preaching to millions. The phenomenonal outpouring of energy and faith he inspired at the World Youth Days. His remarkable bond with young people. His historic meetings with countless world leaders, artists and believers. He was profoundly open to the world, and the world sought him out.

I think this openness is also what attracted so many people to him, and the reason that the world held its breath and prayed virtually in unison in the last few days of his life and mourned him at his passing.

Yet we diminish this papacy if we think that he was nothing more than a celebrity, some kind of generic wise man, a genial father figure for modern multitudes.

Never waffling

In his encyclicals and his many speeches, the Pope was relentless in communicating the power of the Christian message and the teachings of the Church. There was never a desire to waffle, to mitigate or water down this truth. In the Pope’s mind, the Church played an absolutely necessary role in safeguarding this truth and challenging humanity to hear it. John Paul II was clearly a Pope of the Second Vatican Council, where he himself had attended as bishop and helped to shape a key document of that council. Indeed, one could say that he helped to integrate the great insights of that council into the very fiber of the Church in a way that did not disown the past, but built upon it. His openness to Christian denominations, to Judaism, to other religions, his eloquent defense of human life and dignity, his positions on matters of life, justice, war and peace all reflected the great documents of the council.

Historians and theologians can debate what his greatest contribution was to the life of the Church in the late 20th century, but I would suggest that if his greatest gift to the world was his assistance in knocking down the Iron Curtain of communism, his greatest gift to the Church was the creation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Only seven years into his pontificate, he committed the Church to this great project, and when this volume appeared in 1994, it helped to end much of the confusion and equivocation among Catholics about what the Church taught. The Catechism was his last gift to the youth of the Church who he loved so dearly, and its fruits will be seen for decades to come.

This openness to life and clarity of teaching are two of the last legacies of John Paul II’s papacy. The third is his embrace of the cross.

His mortality

In his final weeks, he showed us his acceptance of his physical cross. Informed and suffering, he resolutely let the world see him in all his mortality, showing us that we should not be afraid even unto death.

The image that will linger in my mind was the photo from Good Friday 2005, when we saw the Pope in his chapel, unable to participate in the events of the Triduum, bowed by illness and clutching the crucifix.

But in some ways the very papacy itself was a kind of cross that he accepted without complaint. As a priest, he longed to join a Carmelite monastery rather than go the path of the diocesan priesthood. As bishop, he loved the pastoral moments away from the bishop’s palace and shared with friends and young people. As pope, he certainly endured the constraints of the Vatican that was both his pulpit and his prison. Yet he accepted all of this, opening himself wide to Christ, the obedient, trusting servant.

Decades ago, he told his cardinal in Poland that he wanted to join a Carmelite monastery. The cardinal responded, “First you have to finish what you have begun.”

Karol Wojtyla did finish what he had begun. He fought the good fight. He won the race. He was the good and faithful servant who, I have no doubt, will continue to serve his flock now as intercessor and patron.

I will miss Pope John Paul II. He profoundly shaped my own Catholic life. At this moment of great loss, however, I can only feel gratitude for his presence in the life of our Church and joy that his sufferings have ended and he has now returned home to his Savior’s embrace.

Greg Erlandson is the president of Our Sunday Visitor publishing.
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OUR SUNDAY VISITOR PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE POWERFUL WITNESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II.