

October 22: Saint John Paul II

We offer here the homilies given by his successors at his funeral Mass, beatification Mass, and canonization.

10/22/2021

FUNERAL MASS

OF THE ROMAN PONTIFF

JOHN PAUL II

***HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARD.
JOSEPH RATZINGER***

St Peter's Square

Friday, 8 April 2005

"Follow me. " The Risen Lord says these words to Peter. They are his last words to this disciple, chosen to shepherd his flock. "Follow me" – this lapidary saying of Christ can be taken as the key to understanding the message which comes to us from the life of our late beloved Pope John Paul II. Today we bury his remains in the earth as a seed of immortality – our hearts are full of sadness, yet at the same time of joyful hope and profound gratitude.

These are the sentiments that inspire us, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, present here in Saint Peter's Square, in neighbouring streets and in various other locations within the city of Rome, where an immense crowd, silently praying, has gathered over the last few days. I greet all of you from my heart. In the name of

the College of Cardinals, I also wish to express my respects to Heads of State, Heads of Government and the delegations from various countries. I greet the Authorities and official representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities, and likewise those of different religions. Next I greet the Archbishops, Bishops, priests, religious men and women and the faithful who have come here from every Continent; especially the young, whom John Paul II liked to call the future and the hope of the Church. My greeting is extended, moreover, to all those throughout the world who are united with us through radio and television in this solemn celebration of our beloved Holy Father's funeral.

Follow me – as a young student Karol Wojtyła was thrilled by literature, the theatre, and poetry. Working in a chemical plant, surrounded and threatened by the Nazi terror, he

heard the voice of the Lord: Follow me! In this extraordinary setting he began to read books of philosophy and theology, and then entered the clandestine seminary established by Cardinal Sapieha. After the war he was able to complete his studies in the faculty of theology of the Jagiellonian University of Kraków. How often, in his letters to priests and in his autobiographical books has he spoken to us about his priesthood, to which he was ordained on 1 November 1946. In these texts he interprets his priesthood with particular reference to three sayings of the Lord. First: "You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (*Jn* 15:16). The second saying is: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (*Jn* 10:11). And then: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" (*Jn* 15:9). In these three sayings we see the

heart and soul of our Holy Father. He really went everywhere, untiringly, in order to bear fruit, fruit that lasts. "Rise, Let us be on our Way!" is the title of his next-to-last book. "Rise, let us be on our way!" – with these words he roused us from a lethargic faith, from the sleep of the disciples of both yesterday and today. "Rise, let us be on our way!" he continues to say to us even today. The Holy Father was a priest to the last, for he offered his life to God for his flock and for the entire human family, in a daily self-oblation for the service of the Church, especially amid the sufferings of his final months. And in this way he became one with Christ, the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep. Finally, "abide in my love:" the Pope who tried to meet everyone, who had an ability to forgive and to open his heart to all, tells us once again today, with these words of the Lord, that by abiding in the love of

Christ we learn, at the school of Christ, the art of true love.

Follow me! In July 1958 the young priest Karol Wojtyła began a new stage in his journey with the Lord and in the footsteps of the Lord. Karol had gone to the Masuri lakes for his usual vacation, along with a group of young people who loved canoeing. But he brought with him a letter inviting him to call on the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Wyszyński. He could guess the purpose of the meeting: he was to be appointed as the auxiliary Bishop of Kraków. Leaving the academic world, leaving this challenging engagement with young people, leaving the great intellectual endeavour of striving to understand and interpret the mystery of that creature which is man and of communicating to today's world the Christian interpretation of our being – all this must have seemed to him

like losing his very self, losing what had become the very human identity of this young priest. Follow me – Karol Wojtyła accepted the appointment, for he heard in the Church's call the voice of Christ. And then he realized how true are the Lord's words: "Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it" (*Lk 17:33*). Our Pope – and we all know this – never wanted to make his own life secure, to keep it for himself; he wanted to give of himself unreservedly, to the very last moment, for Christ and thus also for us. And thus he came to experience how everything which he had given over into the Lord's hands came back to him in a new way. His love of words, of poetry, of literature, became an essential part of his pastoral mission and gave new vitality, new urgency, new attractiveness to the preaching of the

Gospel, even when it is a sign of contradiction.

Follow me! In October 1978 Cardinal Wojtyła once again heard the voice of the Lord. Once more there took place that dialogue with Peter reported in the Gospel of this Mass: "Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep!" To the Lord's question, "Karol, do you love me?", the Archbishop of Krakow answered from the depths of his heart: "Lord you know everything; you know that I love you." The love of Christ was the dominant force in the life of our beloved Holy Father. Anyone who ever saw him pray, who ever heard him preach, knows that. Thanks to his being profoundly rooted in Christ, he was able to bear a burden which transcends merely human abilities: that of being the shepherd of Christ's flock, his universal Church. This is not the time to speak of the specific content of this rich

pontificate. I would like only to read two passages of today's liturgy which reflect central elements of his message. In the first reading, Saint Peter says – and with Saint Peter, the Pope himself – "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ - he is Lord of all" (*Acts 10:34-36*). And in the second reading, Saint Paul – and with Saint Paul, our late Pope – exhorts us, crying out: "My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved" (*Phil 4:1*).

Follow me! Together with the command to feed his flock, Christ proclaimed to Peter that he would die a martyr's death. With those words, which conclude and sum up the dialogue on love and on the

mandate of the universal shepherd, the Lord recalls another dialogue, which took place during the Last Supper. There Jesus had said: "Where I am going, you cannot come." Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied: "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow me afterward." (*Jn 13:33,36*). Jesus from the Supper went towards the Cross, went towards his resurrection – he entered into the paschal mystery; and Peter could not yet follow him. Now – after the resurrection – comes the time, comes this "afterward." By shepherding the flock of Christ, Peter enters into the paschal mystery, he goes towards the cross and the resurrection. The Lord says this in these words: "... when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt

around you and take you where you do not wish to go" (*Jn* 21:18). In the first years of his pontificate, still young and full of energy, the Holy Father went to the very ends of the earth, guided by Christ. But afterwards, he increasingly entered into the communion of Christ's sufferings; increasingly he understood the truth of the words: "Someone else will fasten a belt around you." And in this very communion with the suffering Lord, tirelessly and with renewed intensity, he proclaimed the Gospel, the mystery of that love which goes to the end (cf. *Jn* 13:1).

He interpreted for us the paschal mystery as a mystery of divine mercy. In his last book, he wrote: The limit imposed upon evil "is ultimately Divine Mercy" (*Memory and Identity*, pp. 60-61). And reflecting on the assassination attempt, he said: "In sacrificing himself for us all, Christ

gave a new meaning to suffering, opening up a new dimension, a new order: the order of love ... It is this suffering which burns and consumes evil with the flame of love and draws forth even from sin a great flowering of good" (pp. 189-190). Impelled by this vision, the Pope suffered and loved in communion with Christ, and that is why the message of his suffering and his silence proved so eloquent and so fruitful.

Divine Mercy: the Holy Father found the purest reflection of God's mercy in the Mother of God. He, who at an early age had lost his own mother, loved his divine mother all the more. He heard the words of the crucified Lord as addressed personally to him: "Behold your Mother." And so he did as the beloved disciple did: he took her into his own home" ("eis ta idia": *Jn 19:27*) – *Totus tuus*. And from the mother he learned to conform himself to Christ.

None of us can ever forget how in that last Easter Sunday of his life, the Holy Father, marked by suffering, came once more to the window of the Apostolic Palace and one last time gave his blessing *urbi et orbi*. We can be sure that our beloved Pope is standing today at the window of the Father's house, that he sees us and blesses us. Yes, bless us, Holy Father. We entrust your dear soul to the Mother of God, your Mother, who guided you each day and who will guide you now to the eternal glory of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Homily of Benedict XVI

Beatification Mass of Pope John Paul II

May 1, 2011.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Six years ago we gathered in this Square to celebrate the funeral of

Pope John Paul II. Our grief at his loss was deep, but even greater was our sense of an immense grace which embraced Rome and the whole world: a grace which was in some way the fruit of my beloved predecessor's entire life, and especially of his witness in suffering. Even then we perceived the fragrance of his sanctity, and in any number of ways God's People showed their veneration for him. For this reason, with all due respect for the Church's canonical norms, I wanted his cause of beatification to move forward with reasonable haste. And now the longed-for day has come; it came quickly because this is what was pleasing to the Lord: John Paul II is blessed!

I would like to offer a cordial greeting to all of you who on this happy occasion have come in such great numbers to Rome from all over the world—cardinals, patriarchs of

the Eastern Catholic Churches, brother bishops and priests, official delegations, ambassadors and civil authorities, consecrated men and women and lay faithful, and I extend that greeting to all those who join us by radio and television.

Today is the Second Sunday of Easter, which Blessed John Paul II entitled Divine Mercy Sunday. The date was chosen for today's celebration because, in God's providence, my predecessor died on the vigil of this feast. Today is also the first day of May, Mary's month, and the liturgical memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker. All these elements serve to enrich our prayer, they help us in our pilgrimage through time and space; but in heaven a very different celebration is taking place among the angels and saints! Even so, God is but one, and one too is Christ the Lord, who like a bridge joins earth to heaven. At this moment we feel

closer than ever, sharing as it were in the liturgy of heaven.

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (Jn 20:29). In today's Gospel Jesus proclaims this beatitude: the beatitude of faith. For us, it is particularly striking because we are gathered to celebrate a beatification, but even more so because today the one proclaimed blessed is a Pope, a Successor of Peter, one who was called to confirm his brethren in the faith. John Paul II is blessed because of his faith, a strong, generous and apostolic faith. We think at once of another beatitude: "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (Mt 16:17). What did our heavenly Father reveal to Simon? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Because of this faith, Simon becomes Peter, the rock on which Jesus can build his Church.

The eternal beatitude of John Paul II, which today the Church rejoices to proclaim, is wholly contained in these sayings of Jesus: "Blessed are you, Simon" and "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!" It is the beatitude of faith, which John Paul II also received as a gift from God the Father for the building up of Christ's Church.

Our thoughts turn to yet another beatitude, one which appears in the Gospel before all others. It is the beatitude of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer. Mary, who had just conceived Jesus, was told by Saint Elizabeth: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Lk 1:45). The beatitude of faith has its model in Mary, and all of us rejoice that the beatification of John Paul II takes place on this first day of the month of Mary, beneath

the maternal gaze of the one who by her faith sustained the faith of the Apostles and constantly sustains the faith of their successors, especially those called to occupy the Chair of Peter. Mary does not appear in the accounts of Christ's resurrection, yet hers is, as it were, a continual, hidden presence: she is the Mother to whom Jesus entrusted each of his disciples and the entire community. In particular we can see how Saint John and Saint Luke record the powerful, maternal presence of Mary in the passages preceding those read in today's Gospel and first reading. In the account of Jesus' death, Mary appears at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25), and at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles she is seen in the midst of the disciples gathered in prayer in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14).

Today's second reading also speaks to us of faith. Saint Peter himself, filled with spiritual enthusiasm, points out

to the newly-baptized the reason for their hope and their joy. I like to think how in this passage, at the beginning of his First Letter, Peter does not use language of exhortation; instead, he states a fact. He writes: "you rejoice," and he adds: "you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet 1:6, 8-9). All these verbs are in the indicative, because a new reality has come about in Christ's resurrection, a reality to which faith opens the door. "This is the Lord's doing," says the Psalm (118:23), and "it is marvelous in our eyes," the eyes of faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, today our eyes behold, in the full spiritual light of the risen Christ, the beloved and revered figure of John Paul II. Today his name is added to the host of those

whom he proclaimed saints and blesseds during the almost twenty-seven years of his pontificate, thereby forcefully emphasizing the universal vocation to the heights of the Christian life, to holiness, taught by the conciliar Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium. All of us, as members of the people of God—bishops, priests, deacons, laity, men and women religious—are making our pilgrim way to the heavenly homeland where the Virgin Mary has preceded us, associated as she was in a unique and perfect way to the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Karol Wojtyła took part in the Second Vatican Council, first as an auxiliary Bishop and then as Archbishop of Kraków. He was fully aware that the Council's decision to devote the last chapter of its Constitution on the Church to Mary meant that the Mother of the Redeemer is held up as an image and model of holiness for every Christian and for the entire

Church. This was the theological vision which Blessed John Paul II discovered as a young man and subsequently maintained and deepened throughout his life. A vision which is expressed in the scriptural image of the crucified Christ with Mary, his Mother, at his side. This icon from the Gospel of John (19:25-27) was taken up in the episcopal and later the papal coat-of-arms of Karol Wojtyła: a golden cross with the letter "M" on the lower right and the motto "Totus tuus," drawn from the well-known words of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort in which Karol Wojtyła found a guiding light for his life: "Totus tuus ego sum et omnia mea tua sunt. Accipio te in mea omnia. Praebe mihi cor tuum, Maria—I belong entirely to you, and all that I have is yours. I take you for my all. O Mary, give me your heart" (Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, 266).

In his Testament, the new Blessed wrote: "When, on 16 October 1978, the Conclave of Cardinals chose John Paul II, the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, said to me: 'The task of the new Pope will be to lead the Church into the Third Millennium'." And the Pope added: "I would like once again to express my gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the great gift of the Second Vatican Council, to which, together with the whole Church—and especially with the whole episcopate—I feel indebted. I am convinced that it will long be granted to the new generations to draw from the treasures that this Council of the twentieth century has lavished upon us. As a Bishop who took part in the Council from the first to the last day, I desire to entrust this great patrimony to all who are and will be called in the future to put it into practice. For my part, I thank the Eternal Shepherd, who has enabled me to

serve this very great cause in the course of all the years of my Pontificate." And what is this "cause"? It is the same one that John Paul II presented during his first solemn Mass in Saint Peter's Square in the unforgettable words: "Do not be afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ!" What the newly-elected Pope asked of everyone, he was himself the first to do: society, culture, political and economic systems he opened up to Christ, turning back with the strength of a titan—a strength which came to him from God—a tide which appeared irreversible. By his witness of faith, love and apostolic courage, accompanied by great human charisma, this exemplary son of Poland helped believers throughout the world not to be afraid to be called Christian, to belong to the Church, to speak of the Gospel. In a word: he helped us not to fear the truth, because truth is the guarantee of

liberty. To put it even more succinctly: he gave us the strength to believe in Christ, because Christ is Redemptor hominis, the Redeemer of man. This was the theme of his first encyclical, and the thread which runs through all the others.

When Karol Wojtyła ascended to the throne of Peter, he brought with him a deep understanding of the difference between Marxism and Christianity, based on their respective visions of man. This was his message: man is the way of the Church, and Christ is the way of man. With this message, which is the great legacy of the Second Vatican Council and of its "helmsman," the Servant of God Pope Paul VI, John Paul II led the People of God across the threshold of the Third Millennium, which thanks to Christ he was able to call "the threshold of hope." Throughout the long journey of preparation for the great Jubilee he directed Christianity

once again to the future, the future of God, which transcends history while nonetheless directly affecting it. He rightly reclaimed for Christianity that impulse of hope which had in some sense faltered before Marxism and the ideology of progress. He restored to Christianity its true face as a religion of hope, to be lived in history in an "Advent" spirit, in a personal and communitarian existence directed to Christ, the fullness of humanity and the fulfillment of all our longings for justice and peace.

Finally, on a more personal note, I would like to thank God for the gift of having worked for many years with Blessed Pope John Paul II. I had known him earlier and had esteemed him, but for twenty-three years, beginning in 1982 after he called me to Rome to be Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I was at his side and came to

revere him all the more. My own service was sustained by his spiritual depth and by the richness of his insights. His example of prayer continually impressed and edified me: he remained deeply united to God even amid the many demands of his ministry. Then too, there was his witness in suffering: the Lord gradually stripped him of everything, yet he remained ever a "rock," as Christ desired. His profound humility, grounded in close union with Christ, enabled him to continue to lead the Church and to give to the world a message which became all the more eloquent as his physical strength declined. In this way he lived out in an extraordinary way the vocation of every priest and bishop to become completely one with Jesus, whom he daily receives and offers in the Church.

Blessed are you, beloved Pope John Paul II, because you believed!

Continue, we implore you, to sustain from heaven the faith of God's people. You often blessed us in this Square from the Apostolic Palace: Bless us, Holy Father! Amen.

Homily of Pope Francis

St. Peter's Square

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday), 27 April 2014

At the heart of this Sunday, which concludes the Octave of Easter and which Saint John Paul II wished to dedicate to Divine Mercy, are *the glorious wounds of the risen Jesus*.

He had already shown those wounds when he first appeared to the Apostles on the very evening of that day following the Sabbath, the day of the resurrection. But, as we have heard, *Thomas* was not there that evening, and when the others told him that they had seen the Lord, he

replied that unless he himself saw and touched those wounds, he would not believe. A week later, Jesus appeared once more to the disciples gathered in the Upper Room. Thomas was also present; Jesus turned to him and told him to touch his wounds. Whereupon that man, so straightforward and accustomed to testing everything personally, knelt before Jesus with the words: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

The wounds of Jesus are *a scandal, a stumbling block for faith*, yet they are also *the test of faith*. That is why on the body of the risen Christ the wounds never pass away: they remain, for those wounds are the enduring sign of God's love for us. They are *essential for believing in God*. Not for believing that God exists, but for believing that *God is love, mercy and faithfulness*. Saint Peter, quoting Isaiah, writes to

Christians: "by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet 2:24, cf. Is 53:5).

Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II *were not afraid to look upon the wounds of Jesus, to touch his torn hands and his pierced side.* They were not ashamed of the flesh of Christ, they were not scandalized by him, by his cross; they did not despise the flesh of their brother (cf. Is 58:7), because they saw Jesus in every person who suffers and struggles. These were two men of courage, filled with the *parrhesia* of the Holy Spirit, and they bore witness before the Church and the world to God's goodness and mercy.

They were priests, and bishops and popes of the twentieth century. They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful; faith was more powerful – faith in Jesus Christ

the Redeemer of man and the Lord of history; the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful; and more powerful too was the closeness of Mary our Mother.

In these two men, who looked upon the wounds of Christ and bore witness to his mercy, there dwelt *a living hope and an indescribable and glorious joy (1 Pet 1:3,8)*. The hope and the joy which the risen Christ bestows on his disciples, the hope and the joy which nothing and no one can take from them. The *hope and joy of Easter*, forged in the crucible of self-denial, self-emptying, utter identification with sinners, even to the point of disgust at the bitterness of that chalice. Such were the hope and the joy which these two holy popes had received as a gift from the risen Lord and which they in turn bestowed in abundance upon

the People of God, meriting our eternal gratitude.

This hope and this joy were palpable in the *earliest community of believers*, in Jerusalem, as we have heard in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. 2:42-47). It was a community which *lived the heart of the Gospel*, love and mercy, in simplicity and fraternity.

This is also the image of the Church which the Second Vatican Council set before us. John XXIII and John Paul II cooperated with the Holy Spirit in *renewing and updating the Church in keeping with her pristine features*, those features which the saints have given her throughout the centuries. Let us not forget that it is the saints who give direction and growth to the Church. In convening the Council, Saint John XXIII showed an exquisite *openness to the Holy Spirit*. He let himself be led and he was for the Church a pastor, a servant-leader,

guided by the Holy Spirit. This was his great service to the Church; for this reason I like to think of him as *the pope of openness to the Holy Spirit.*

In his own service to the People of God, Saint John Paul II was *the pope of the family*. He himself once said that he wanted to be remembered as the pope of the family. I am particularly happy to point this out as we are in the process of *journeying with families towards the Synod on the family*. It is surely a journey which, from his place in heaven, he guides and sustains.

May these two new saints and shepherds of God's people intercede for the Church, so that during this two-year journey toward the Synod she may be open to the Holy Spirit in pastoral service to the family. May both of them teach us not to be scandalized by the wounds of Christ

and to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of divine mercy, which always hopes and always forgives, because it always loves.

pdf | document generated automatically from <https://opusdei.org/en-tt/article/october-22-saint-john-paul-ii/> (02/08/2026)