



The Holy See

RECITAL OF THE ROSARY ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF
THE SERVANT OF GOD JOHN PAUL II

REFLECTION OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 2 April 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are meeting this evening, on the first anniversary of the departure of beloved Pope John Paul II, for this Marian Vigil organized by the Diocese of Rome. I greet with affection all of you present here in St Peter's Square, starting with the Cardinal Vicar Camillo Ruini and the Auxiliary Bishops, with a special thought for the Cardinals, Bishops, priests and Religious, and for the lay faithful, especially the youth.

Truly, the entire city of Rome is symbolically gathered for this emotional moment of prayer and reflection. I address a special greeting to Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow, who is linked to us by television and who was for many years a faithful collaborator of the late Pontiff.

A year has already passed since the death of the Servant of God John Paul II at this very moment - it was 9: 37 p.m. - but his memory lives on, more alive than ever, as is testified to by the many events scheduled to take place in these days throughout the world.

He continues to be present in our minds and hearts; he continues to communicate to us his love for God and his love for man; he continues to inspire in one and all, and especially in the young, enthusiasm for good and the courage to follow Jesus and his teachings.

How can we sum up the life and evangelical witness of this great Pontiff? I will attempt to do so by using two words: "fidelity" and "dedication", total fidelity to God and unreserved dedication to his mission as Pastor of the universal Church.

Fidelity and dedication appeared even more convincing and moving in his final months, when he embodied in himself what he wrote in 1984 in the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*: "Suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbour, in order to transform the whole of human civilization into a "civilization of love" (n. 30).

His courageously-faced illness made everyone more attentive to human suffering, to all physical and spiritual pain; he gave dignity and value to suffering, witnessing that the human being's value does not depend on his efficiency or appearance but on himself, because he was created and loved by God.

With his words and gestures, the dear John Paul II never tired of pointing out to the world that if a person allows himself to be embraced by Christ, he does not repress the riches of his humanity; if he adheres to Christ with all his heart, he will never lack anything. On the contrary, the encounter with Christ makes our lives more impassioned.

Precisely because he drew ever closer to God in prayer, contemplation and love for Truth and Beauty, our beloved Pope was able to become the travelling companion of each one of us and even to speak authoritatively to those who had nothing to do with the Christian faith.

This evening, the first anniversary of his return to the Father's House, we are invited to accept anew the spiritual legacy he has bequeathed to us; we are urged, among other things, to live by seeking tirelessly the Truth that alone brings relief to our hearts. We are encouraged not to be afraid to follow Christ in order to bring everyone the Gospel proclamation which is the leaven of a more fraternal and supportive humanity.

May John Paul II help us from Heaven to continue on our way, remaining docile disciples of Jesus in order to be, as he himself loved to repeat to young people, "dawn watchmen" at the beginning of this third Christian millennium. For this, let us call on Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, for whom he always felt a tender devotion.

I now address the faithful in Poland who are linked up with us.

Let us join in spirit the Poles who have gathered in Krakow, Warsaw and other places for the Vigil. The memory of John Paul II is alive within us; the sense of his spiritual presence has not faded. May the memory of the special love he felt for his fellow countrymen always be for you the light on your way towards Christ. "Stay strong in the faith". I bless you with all my heart.

I now impart my Blessing to you all.

