

Prayer Service for the late Pope John Paul II — April 4, 2005
Noon — O'Neill Plaza — Boston College

Opening Song — “Be Not Afraid”

Greeting — Fr. Jim Erps, SJ, Director of Campus Ministry

Opening Prayer — Fr. Erps

Scripture — Luke 24:1

John Paul II, in his words — Undergraduate government’s Grace Simmons ’05, Burnell Holland ’05, and other students

Comments by University President William P. Leahy, SJ

Minute of silence (with Gasson bells)

General Intercessions

Closing Prayer — May the Angels — Fr. Erps

Closing Song — “On Eagles’ Wings”

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Greeting

Good afternoon. My name is Fr. Jim Erps and I am the director of Campus Ministry.

We come together today to honor a truly great man. Twenty-six-years ago, Karol Wojtyla was elected Bishop of Rome and thus became leader of the Roman Catholic Church around the world.

He was an obscure Polish bishop, who during his life and ministry was seen and heard personally by more people than anyone in the history of our planet.

His message was always strong. Most basically, it was the message of the Gospel. He worked to bring the simple message of Jesus to our world.

He reached out to people of all faiths and all cultures. The first pope to visit a mosque. The first pope in centuries to enter a synagogue. The first pope to visit leaders of the Orthodox Church since the Schism of 1054.

Upon arrival, whether it be Boston or Bosnia, he would embrace and kiss the soil, showing his respect and love for all the people of that land.

He was an advocate for peace. He was an advocate for the poor and the developing world. He was an advocate for human rights. He called on all cultures to better respect the great gift of life.

In his final days, he composed a prayer which sums up his lifelong message. It reads in part:

“It is love which converts hearts and gives peace to all humanity; humanity — which today seems so lost and dominated by the power of selfishness and fear: our resurrected Lord gives us his love, which forgives, reconciles and opens the soul to hope.”

And so let us pray for John Paul II:

God of endless ages, from one generation to the next you have been our refuge. Have mercy now on your servant John Paul whose long life was spent in your service. Give him a place in your kingdom, where hope is firm for all who love and rest is sure for all who serve. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Scripture —Luke 24:1

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

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John Paul II, in his own words:

- ❖ I have a sweet tooth for song and music. This is my Polish sin.
- ❖ Humanity always travels along precipices. Our truest obligation is to keep our balance.
- ❖ Science can purify religion from error and superstition. Religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes.
- ❖ Humanity should question itself, once more, about the absurd and always unfair phenomenon of war, on whose stage of death and pain only remain standing the negotiating table that could and should have prevented it.
- ❖ On my knees I beg you to turn away from the paths of violence and return to the ways of peace. You may claim to seek justice. I too believe in justice and seek justice. But violence only delays the day of justice. Violence destroys the work of justice. *Northern Ireland. 1979.*
- ❖ Never lose your trust, do not be defeated, do not be discouraged, do not cut yourselves off from your roots. *Poland, 1979.*
- ❖ Radical changes in world politics leave America with a heightened responsibility to be, for the world, an example of a genuinely free, democratic, just and humane society.
- ❖ Once again, I state strongly, the Church “deplores the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and by anyone.” I repeat, “By anyone.”
- ❖ Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyles. The future starts today, not tomorrow.
- ❖ Have no fear of moving into the unknown. Simply step out fearlessly knowing that I am with you, therefore no harm can befall you; all is very, very well. Do this in complete faith and confidence.

- ❖ I hope to have communion with the people, that is the most important thing.
- ❖ It is unbecoming for a cardinal to ski badly.

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Comments by University President William P. Leahy, SJ

We gather as the Boston College community this afternoon to pray for Pope John Paul II. We feel a sense of loss and sadness because he was such a presence in our lives for so many years. At times like these, we want to be with others and draw strength from those around us.

It seems to me that today is a time to remember and to rededicate.

We remember Pope John Paul, his life, values, and personality. He touched the lives of millions, especially young people, through his faith, travels, and example. I am sure many images of him have come to mind in recent days:

of John Paul, dressed in white, blessing crowds and reaching out to touch those near him;

of John Paul speaking from the window of his Vatican apartment;

of John Paul praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem;

of John Paul struggling to walk and talk and be present to us in his last years.

In his life he was many things: head of the Catholic Church; a religious and political leader; teacher and philosopher; voice for the poor, the unborn, and defenseless; and advocate for linking Christian faith and social justice.

I think of John Paul as a pilgrim, someone traveling the road of life with a powerful sense of a mission. He did not restrict himself to the Vatican. He visited more than 100 countries and traveled almost 750,000 miles as pope. Because of the medium of television, his face was instantly recognized throughout the world. His life reminds me of a passage in the 4th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. The crowds attracted to Christ tried to prevent him from

leaving them. But Christ declared, “To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent.”

John Paul was a pilgrim imbued with deep religious faith. God was his guide as he lived out his priesthood, first in Poland and later as pope. His journey was not always easy, particularly his encounter with the two great totalitarian evils of the 20th century: Nazism and Communism. But as pilgrims must, he did not give up hope, but emerged wiser and compassionate from these experiences. On his life’s pilgrimage, he labored to serve people, to speak the truth in love. He was clear and steadfast in his views, despite opposition. In so many ways he lived the words of the prophet Micah: “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

He sought to proclaim that Christ was the source of life and hope, that we should not be afraid of the future or be overwhelmed by challenges. He showed us how to live with faith and hope—and in recent weeks how to die with trust and confidence—as he dealt with declining health and approaching death in such a public and courageous way. He was ever the pilgrim, moving through life, preaching in word and deed, calling on human beings to live their faith and to be signs of hope.

So, today we remember John Paul II. But I think it is also a time to rededicate: to rededicate ourselves to living according to our core human, religious, and cultural values. Those will be different for each of us, but the life and death of Pope John Paul invite us to consider how we live as human beings in today’s world, how we respond to those in need, how we use our gifts, how we build up the community around us.

John Paul was shaped by his Catholic faith, Polish roots, and intellectual pursuits, and his life was marked by integrity, zeal, and compassion. What finer way to honor him than to rededicate ourselves to our own intellectual, spiritual, and social pursuits and in doing so help make our world more just, more peaceful, and more loving, goals for which John Paul worked all his life.

The life journey of John Paul II, the pilgrim pope, has ended; God has called him home. May he rest in peace and may all of us draw strength from his faith and example.

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General Intercessions

- ❖ To honor this man of peace, let us pray:

That we may follow his example of tireless work for peace, justice and reconciliation throughout the world.

We pray to the Lord.

- ❖ To honor this man of ecumenism, let us pray:

That we may grow in respect and understanding of all faiths and traditions.

We pray to the Lord.

- ❖ To honor this man of evangelization, let us pray:

That we may proclaim the Word of Christ by the courageous example of our lives.

We pray to the Lord.

- ❖ To honor this man who looked with love and hope upon the youth of the world, let us pray:

That we may celebrate the gifts and spirituality of the young people here today, that you may be unafraid to respond to God's call for a more loving and just world.

We pray to the Lord.

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Final Commendation

Into your hands, Father of mercies,
We commend our brother John Paul
In the sure and certain hope
Of the resurrection from the dead.

Merciful Lord,
Turn toward us and listen to our prayers:
Open the gates of paradise to your servant
And help us who remain
To comfort one another with assurances of faith,
Until we all meet again
And are with you and with our brother forever.

Holy Father,
May the angels lead you into paradise;
May the martyrs come to welcome you
And take you to the holy city,
The new and eternal Jerusalem.

May the choirs of angels welcome you
And where Lazarus is poor no longer
May you find eternal rest.

Eternal Rest grant unto him, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon him.
May he rest in peace. May his soul and the souls
of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.