

The Legacy of John Paul I

The following is excerpted from the text of the general audience of Pope John Paul II on the work of Pope John Paul I.

The pontificate of John Paul I, even if it lasted less than five weeks, left a particular imprint on the Roman See and on the universal Church. Perhaps this imprint has not yet been fully delineated: it is clearly perceived. In order to decipher it in its depths one needs a wider perspective. It is only with the years that the designs of Providence become more comprehensible to minds accustomed to judge only according to the categories of human history. One moment of this short pontificate, however, seems particularly eloquent for all those who have studied the figure of John Paul I, and who followed with attention his short activity. This activity took place in the period in which — following the conclusion of the Synod of Bishops, dedicated to catechesis (October 1977) — the Church began to assimilate the fruits of this great collegial work and, above all, awaited the publication of the appropriate document, which the participants at the Synod had requested from Paul VI. Unfortunately, death did not permit this great pope to publish his exhortation of such a key theme for the life of the Church. Neither had John Paul I the time to carry out this task. His pontificate was, in fact, too short.



But even if he was unable to publish the document dedicated to catechesis, on the other hand he was able, he certainly was able, to show and confirm with his own actions an irreplaceable task of the apostolate



Albino Luciani
His Holiness Pope John Paul I

October 17, 1912 - September 28, 1978

and of pastoral activity. John Paul I was not able to publish under his own name the document we are speaking about; however, he had the time to show and affirm with his own example what catechesis is and what it should be in the life of the Church of our times.

This he did within the thirty-three days of his pontificate.

And when, shortly, the document dedicated to catechesis appears, one must remember that the entire singular pontificate of John Paul I was principally a living commentary on this document and on this theme. One could say that the testament of the Pope consists in this document. In fact, he left no other testament.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the election of John Paul I to the chair of St. Peter I wish to go to his native village at Canale d'Agordo, in the diocese of Belluno.

I am going to fulfil a need of my heart.

I am going, also, to render homage to my immediate predecessor, from whom I have inherited my name, and to that pontificate, through which there speaks to us a truth which is greater than human truth. The Church living on the earth, in Rome and in all the world, was enlightened by this light which is greater than human light and which no history can embrace and explain. This truth, however, was expressed with great strength by the Gospel of the Lord: "The appointed time has grown very short". "Surely, I am coming soon."

It now seems clear that the pontificate of John Paul I can be summed up in this single phrase: "Come, Lord Jesus," "Maranatha." The Eternal Father considered it most necessary for the Church; for each one of us and for all without exception. It is on this phrase that we must reflect as the anniversary of the election and later of the death of John Paul I, Servant of the Servants of God draws near.

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

How Do We Take Up The Cross?

of our Lord to His words — to His private instructions to His own about His passion, death and resurrection.

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 8:27-35. (R1) Is. 50:4-9. (R2) Jas. 2:14-18.

Mark's gospel of sixteen chapters is divided into two almost equal halves. The first half narrates the public ministry of our Lord and stresses the enthusiasm of the crowds. The high point of this half is in the eighth chapter (R3) — the confession of St. Peter. This is a hinge passage, for once this high point has been reached, Mark swings from the works



Fr. Shamon point of this half is in the eighth chapter (R3) — the confession of St. Peter. This is a hinge passage, for once this high point has been reached, Mark swings from the works

If people were confused about who Jesus was, if religious leaders were hostile, His own were positively confounded by this switch of Jesus to the cross. That Jesus' prediction of His suffering and death should confound the apostles is strange. They certainly must have read Isaiah (R1) and the other prophets. They must have known what had happened to them. Like umpires in a baseball game, abuse was part of their job description. People abused the prophets, rejected them, often murdered them, because they relentlessly spoke the truth. Why did they think it would be different with the Lord of the prophets?

Yet we too know that the

cross is part of the Christian heritage. But often are we not scandalized by it? Do we not react like Peter? And all this in the face of the unmistakably clear words of Jesus: "If a man wishes to come after me, he... must take up the cross." How do we take up the cross?

There is a story about an old man who found it hard to carry his cross. His name was Caecus. His cross was that gradually he had grown blind with age. He cherished his independence. He hated having to wait for his grandson to come home from school to guide him on his daily walk. Often he worried everyone by wandering off alone.

One day Caecus sneaked off by himself. He stumbled onto a railroad track. He was glad, because he would not get lost if he stayed on the track. So he started to walk along the tracks.

After awhile he could hear the distant rumble of a train. Caecus started to inch off the track to get out of the way. To his consternation,

he discovered he was on a trestle. The train pounded closer and closer. In frightful hurry, Caecus lowered himself from the track and hung on for dear life from a wooden tie on the trestle.

The train thundered by overhead. The noise was deafening. After about five minutes when the last freight car had clattered by,

Caecus tried to hoist himself up onto the tracks. But he was old, his arms were numb, he couldn't do it. So he hung there for awhile, thought about his life, and finally let go.

He fell about four inches. He had been at the very end of the trestle and didn't know it. Imagine his relief! Imagine his chagrin af-

terwards, at thinking how he had hung there all the while when there was no need to.

What is our reaction to the cross? Are we peevish? Waspish? Do we resent at times our having to depend on others? Do we hang on to fears that are groundless? Do we let go only to find that the cross often is of our own making?

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Msgr. Mukasa Dies

Kampala, Uganda (RNS) — Msgr. Victor Mukasa, the first Ugandan to be ordained a Roman Catholic priest, has died at the age of 97.

He was born May 5, 1882 and ordained a priest on June 29, 1913.

Bishop Named

Washington (RNS) — Pope John Paul II has appointed Msgr. Joseph A. Fiorenza as bishop of San Angelo, Tex. He succeeds Bishop Stephen A. Leven, 74, who resigned in April.

Bishop-designate Fiorenza, 48, has been the chancellor of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston since 1973.



Anniversary Dinner

The Catholic Women's Club social season opens Sept. 24 with a dinner and reception for new members. Ann Fertig, left, vice president and chairman of the current membership drive, goes over the plans with Mary McInerney, who has charge of the dinner, a 60th anniversary celebration. Today is the deadline for reservations, which can be made through the club office, 275-9173. The dinner is scheduled for 6 p.m. in Medaille Hall, Nazareth College.

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