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This photo of Pope John Paul II is part of a series of images from the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* featured in a special exhibit at Washington's Pope John Paul II Cultural Center through January 2004. It was captured during the pope's 1984 visit to Canada.

'A papacy for the ages'

John Paul II marks 25 years as pope

VATICAN CITY — As Pope John Paul II celebrates 25 years in office, the world is taking stock of a pontificate that has helped shape political events, set new directions for the Catholic Church and offered spiritual inspiration to millions around the globe.

By any measure, this is a papacy for the ages. Since his election Oct. 16, 1978, Pope John Paul has delivered more speeches, met with more

world leaders and canonized more saints than any previous pontiff.

Visiting 129 countries, he has implemented the church's own form of globalization.

In more than 50 major documents, on themes ranging from economics to the rosary, he has brought the Gospel and church teachings to bear on many aspects of modern life.

Everyone agrees this pope already has left a moral legacy. But the pope also has weathered his share of disappointments in recent years, including the U.S. clerical sex-

abuse scandal, the ecumenical rupture with Orthodox leaders, legislative defeats on pro-life issues in many countries and not being able to visit Russia and China.

Vatican officials are focusing on the accomplishments, but are going out of their way to make sure the anniversary celebration does not take on the tone of a retirement party.

"The pope still has an important message to deliver, and people are listening — perhaps more than ever," Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-

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"Pope John Paul II has been a tireless advocate for the dignity of the human person and the centrality of human rights.

"Beginning with his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* ('Redeemer of Man'), and through other various writings and talks, he has presented to the world a vigorous defense of the human person. In a society that is increasingly coarsened by toleration for acts that purposely destroy human life, John Paul has sought to remind us that the test of every institution or policy will be whether or not it enhances or threatens human life and human dignity."

— Father Kevin McKenna
pastor, St. Cecilia Parish
Irondequoit

"The title 'His Holiness' fits this pope so appropriately. He is a saint living in our times, and I admire his strength and wisdom. He listens to God and does not bend with public opinion. The most significant aspect of these past 25 years is how Pope John Paul has focused on the dignity of human life. How our heavenly Father must be pleased with him."

— Judie Worhacz, parish secretary, St. Bridget/
St. Joseph Parish
East Bloomfield

"I was fortunate to attend the cardinal installation in Rome in February of 2001. The pope has great charisma and you feel his presence even in such a big crowd and with his illness. The pope is a symbol of hope and shows us that illness and aging cannot keep a powerful spirit down. I may not always agree with his policies ... but that does not mean that I don't respect and admire him as our 'papa.'"

— Monette Mahoney
principal, St. Joseph School
Wayland

Story and photos by Catholic News Service

