

"I'll never forget the excitement surrounding the trip the Holy Father made to Des Moines, Iowa, in 1979. This was my first experience of such a multitude of people, old and young alike, sharing so much love and enthusiasm. Pope John Paul made me so proud to be a Catholic. I remember how we thought it was marvelous that the pope spoke to us in English! This type of visit by the pope became his trademark to his flock."

— **Dave Doty, principal**
St. Michael School, Newark

"What stands out for me is his strong and unwavering commitment to life and his willingness to speak out for life in a powerful manner. The Holy Father has not chosen to tone down his comments when addressing world leaders about the dignity of human life."

— **Deacon Ed Giblin**
Holy Cross Parish, Charlotte

"One morning in the early 1980s, I was greeting people before Mass in the foyer of St. Mary's Church downtown. A guest from one of the local hotels was from Poland. 'I was one of Karol Wojtyla's classmates in school,' she offered. 'We were also in the underground together. I will be going soon to Rome where I will see him.' 'And what will you say to him?' I asked. She grinned. 'I will kiss his ring, and then I will say: 'Hello, Lolek!' (his childhood nickname) 'It's no surprise that, sometimes, when I pray for Pope John Paul II, I pray for Lolek.'"

— **Sister Joan Sobala, SSJ, pastoral administrator, St. Felix, Clifton Springs/St. Francis, Phelps**

"In 1982, Fathers B. Thomas Celso, Timothy Horan and William Spong and I concelebrated Pope John Paul II's early morning Mass in his private chapel. The Mass was in English. I can only surmise that he used our native tongue because he was leaving for England the next day, May 28. This was during the time of the Falkland Islands/Malvinas conflict between Great Britain and Argentina. On May 29, His Holiness met with the Archbishop of Canterbury. June 10-13, he made his 13th apostolic voyage, this one to South America. On June 14, Argentine commander Mario Menendez agreed to a cease fire and surrendered."

"That this pope was influential in ending this conflict, I have little doubt. I am simply grateful that we were able to play a small part in this effort by allowing him to practice his English before his departure for the UK."

— **Father Robert J. Schrader, pastor**
St. Mary's Parish, Auburn

POPE

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Valls said in an interview with Catholic News Service.

"He is the only global leader who is worried about the spiritual well-being of today's men and women, as opposed to their material well-being. He asks, 'Who are you?' instead of 'What do you want to do?' or 'What do you want to buy?' And people understand this and respond to it," he said.

For papal biographer George Weigel, the pope has had tremendous impact on the world and the church precisely because "he's been the great Christian witness of our time, the man who has most persuasively embodied the liberating power of Christian faith."

The first non-Italian pontiff in 455 years, Pope John Paul II declared early on that the Second Vatican Council had set his agenda.

At the teaching level, the pope has penned three major encyclicals on economic and social-justice issues and has addressed the rich-poor imbalance continent-by-continent in post-synodal documents.

Over the last 10 years, he also has authored three other encyclicals that strongly challenge what he sees as a prevailing moral relativism in post-modern society. *Veritatis Splendor* spoke of the truth of the church's moral teachings, *Evangelium Vitae* defended the inviolability of human life against what the pope calls a "culture of death," and *Fides et Ratio* argued that human reason cannot be detached from faith in God.

On an interreligious level, Pope John Paul has reached out in ways that were once considered impossible or even heretical. In 1986 he visited a Jewish synagogue in Rome, then in 2000 prayed at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

In Syria, he became the first pope to visit a mosque, and in Morocco he spoke to thousands of cheering Muslim youths.

Within the church, the pope has been no less dynamic. He has disciplined dissenting theologians and self-styled "traditionalists," promulgated a new Code of Canon Law, issued new directives calling for clearer Catholic identity in church universities, and defended with the full weight of his authority the church's all-male priesthood.

As a teacher of the faith, the pope has been exhaustive, demanding and authoritative. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is his longest document and will no doubt be seen as one of the great accomplishments of this pontificate.

Pope John Paul has proposed models of holiness to the world's 1.1 billion Catholics. He has canonized more than 470 people from dozens of



Pope John Paul II waves to people gathered in St. Peter's Square May 18 for the canonization of four saints and his 83rd birthday celebration.

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countries and beatified more than 1,300 — including the first lay couple.

At the 25-year mark, the pope's record on ecumenism contains a long list of agreements, joint declarations and mutual gestures of good will, especially with some ancient Eastern churches.

Pope John Paul's pontificate is the fourth-longest in history, and has named more than three-fourths of the world's active bishops and 96 percent of the cardinals who will elect his successor.

As the pope has aged, his rapport with young people has remained consistently fresh and energetic. World Youth Day celebrations, like the last one in Toronto in 2002, seem to bring out the pope's good humor and vigor.

As his 25th anniversary approached, the pope was in the final phase of writing a book on his 20 years as a bishop in Poland.



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