

April 4, 2005

Diocesan Mass for Pope John Paul II

Homily of Bishop Joseph V. Adamec

How appropriate it is that we should be praying for His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, on this Marian Solemnity when the Church recalls the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Lady. As you know, our former Pontiff had a very special devotion to the Mother of God.

You have been, no doubt, among the many watching the unfolding drama at the Vatican via television. We have been hearing many wonderful things about this pope, who, through his faithful witness, has captured the hearts of both believers and non-believers, - of both those who agreed with him and those who did not. There is not much more (if anything) that can be said.

On October 16, 2003, when we celebrated the Holy Father's 25th anniversary as pope, I stated the following: "Pope John Paul II has put a human face on the Church as millions have beheld his face in his encounter with God's people throughout the world during these twenty five years. He has upheld the dignity of the human person in all the stages of humankind; and, this in the face of great opposition. Our Holy Father has given us an example in his own person that the cross of Christ continues and that we need to continue under the cross of Christ in the continuing process of our redemption."

The rapport that he had with the youth of the world and his promotion of ecumenism are two very important aspects of the legacy that he leaves us. He was a strong supporter of the Church's teachings formulated at the Second Vatican Council. The voluminous writings that came from his mind, heart, and hand have yet to be digested. In all of this, he gave us hope for the future.

His very person spoke of Church, as it reflects the love of Christ for his people. When you were with him, you knew that you were in the presence of a great person.

I leave Tuesday for Rome and the Vatican, where for the last time I will be able to sense Pope John Paul II's presence, his support, and his encouragement. For the last time, I will enter his home, where, always, I was made to feel at home. There I will thank him one more time for the trust that he placed in me to shepherd this Diocesan Church. There, I will represent our Diocesan Church in gratitude for the blessing that he has been to us. We will continue to be reminded of him through the special bond that he established with our Diocese by accepting Saint Michael's Church in Loretto as one of his basilicas churches.

May the Heavenly Father grant this faithful and suffering servant of God his eternal presence, even as we pray, - even as we give thanks for God's gift to us of this great high priest for these past twenty six years. How could we even think that it might be

otherwise! However, it remains for us now to accept his legacy and to continue our journey in the faithfulness that he left us as an example.

We have been privileged to share in the witness of one of the greatest popes in our Church's history. He, truly, has been the spiritual leader for our time. Pope John Paul II deserves, without question, the title of great. The Church, - and, even the world, - is better for his having been among us.