



# Do Not Be Afraid to Walk the Way of Holiness

*A great number of the faithful already consider Pope John Paul II a saint. We saw this during his funeral in the banner slogans and shouts calling for his immediate canonization "Santo Subito!".*



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**John Paul II radiated holiness.** He radiated the beauty of his humanity, the richness of his personality, his goodness, wisdom and love. In a word, **he radiated Christ, for Christ alone is the source and cause of our holiness.** It was Jesus Christ who made His love present in the life, pastoral service, suffering and death of John Paul II, Servant of God.

## Do not be afraid to receive Christ

The example of John Paul II's life underscores the fact that we are all called to live in fellowship with God

and partake of His very nature (2 Pt 1:4). **No one can attain the fullness of humanity without first uniting himself with Christ** and allowing himself to be embraced by His merciful love, which wipes away every sin, strikes off every shackle of evil, heals the most painful wounds, and makes saints out of the greatest sinners.

The world's fascination with the holiness of John Paul II is a sign that Christ is calling all sinners—you and me—to Himself. He gives us everything we need to become saints, i.e. to achieve perfect happiness. All He wants of us is our consent and willingness to work with Him. Ultimately it is God who

makes saints of us, who makes us his divine children, but He cannot do this without our consent and cooperation.

From his place in heaven, John Paul II calls out to us with even greater force than he did during his life on earth. He appeals to us through his entire spiritual legacy: **Do not be afraid to open the doors of your hearts to Christ!** Do not be afraid to offer yourselves to Mary as her exclusive possession. Do not be afraid to say, *Totus Tuus!—All Yours!* so as to learn from Mary how to give yourself totally to Jesus, how to believe heroically, hoping against all human hope. Do not be afraid to take the path of holiness. Do not be afraid to say to Christ every day, *Lord, I want to become holy, that is to say, as You wish me to become.* **Do not be afraid to follow Christ every day, to walk the way of the Gospel and His commandments, the way of faith, which expresses itself in love.** Do not be afraid to entrust yourself entirely to Christ. He loved us *to the end*, took our sins upon Himself, so as to blot them out by His death and resurrection. **Do not be afraid to confess your sins to Christ in the Sacrament of Penance and to trust in His infinite mercy.**

John Paul II taught us that holiness is union with Christ. It is like being grafted onto Christ, much as a shoot is grafted onto a vine: *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5). When we are grafted

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onto Christ, we partake of the life and love of God Himself and thus attain the fullness of our humanity, achieve full self-realization, since Christ perfects His work of creation in us and makes saints of us.

### What must I do to become a saint?

The desire for holiness is a desire to become fully human. Holiness is love, freedom and truth; it is perfect happiness. Without collaborating with Christ, we can never achieve this happiness. What then must we do to become saints? We have only to look at the example set for us by John Paul II.

If we wish to take part in the superb adventure that walking in holiness is, we must first go to confession and confess our sins. After receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, we must tell Jesus that we desire to make the journey of life with Him, so as to be taught by Him how to love, how to rid ourselves of selfishness and be transformed into saints. As did John Paul II from his very childhood, so must we entrust ourselves entirely to Jesus through Mary. We must entrust everything—our past, present, future, everything that we are, everything that we possess. Like John Paul let us constantly repeat the motto, *Totus Tuus!* (All Yours!) in our prayers.

Jesus Christ is *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn 14: 6). We must encounter Him and love Him. The best way to do



After John Paul II's funeral Mass

this is through the Eucharist. Let us seek out every possible occasion to go to Holy Mass and receive Jesus into our hearts so as to nourish ourselves with His Body and strengthen ourselves by His presence. Jesus will fill us with His holiness and His life. He will show us the way and reveal the truth of His will, which, though not always easy to accept, brings us to the fullness of life.

To all those who become discouraged, John Paul II says, *Rise, let us be on our way!* And, to console us, he says: *Even if these words mean a time of trial, great effort and a painful cross, we have nothing to fear. For these words also carry within them joy and peace; and these are the fruits*

*of faith....God's love does not place unbearable burdens upon us; nor does it exact impossible demands. If it calls on us, it comes with the necessary help (Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way!, pp.163-164).*

### Rise, let us be on our way!

To walk in faith every day, we need self-discipline. We need to draw up a daily timetable and stick to it with iron resolve. Our schedule should include regular time for prayer (when we can be one-on-one with Christ), time for work and serving others, as well as time for wholesome recreation. Whatever the activity, whether it be



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: Notes of gratitude posted by pilgrims at St. Peter's Square

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work, study, or prayer, we need to pursue it wholeheartedly. We must be demanding of ourselves and overcome the selfishness that lies at the root of our laziness and self-indulgence. How? By a decision of the will that forces us to action: to pray, to work, etc., especially when we least feel like doing so.

When, despite our weaknesses and relapses, we walk the way of the Gospels and the commandments, when we strive to discern and carry out God's will in all areas and dimensions of our lives, when we do all this, Christ is then able to shape our humanity, perfect the work of His creation—in a word, turn us into saints.

We must always remember that the source of our spiritual strength is prayer. It is through prayer and the sacraments, above all through the Eucharist, that we allow Jesus to transform our hearts, to free them from sin and make them apt for love. Thus we do ourselves great harm when we neglect our prayer life or stop praying altogether, since then our spiritual life becomes stunted and dies. We become defenseless against the attacks of evil spirits who proceed to enslave and manipulate us.

To walk in the way of faith, we must set aside specific times for daily prayer: times for the rosary, the chaplet of Divine Mercy, meditation on Holy Scripture, Eucharistic Adoration, or other forms of prayer. Our physical and mental state can never excuse us from

the responsibility to pray. **It is precisely when we do not feel like praying that we need to pray twice as long**, while offering up our disinclination and indisposition to Jesus. Disinclination to prayer, putting it off till later, is one of the most insidious and dangerous temptations of the Evil One. We need to be aware of these temptations and strenuously resist them.

**Regular, monthly confession must also be an integral part of our spiritual life.** It is a good idea to have a regular confessor. In this connection, saying the following prayer to Jesus is particularly important: *Dear Jesus, I promise I will try to remain in a state*

*of sanctifying grace. If, however, I should commit a serious sin, I will immediately come to You to be freed of my sin in the Sacrament of Penance.*

Clearly, everything in John Paul II's life began *at the feet of Christ who remains hidden in the Blessed Sacrament.* The secret of his greatness lay precisely in prayer. Every day he devoted several hours to it. It was from the Holy Mass, prayer and contemplation that he drew his love, wisdom, knowledge and strength, for Christ is the one Source, in which *lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:3). Recalling his days as Archbishop of Cracow, the Holy Father wrote: *Not only did I pray in the house chapel, but I also sat and wrote there. It was there that I wrote my books, among them, The Acting Person. I am convinced that the chapel is a locus of extraordinary inspiration. It was a great privilege to be able to live and work in the precincts of this Presence, which acted on me like a powerful magnet. In his book, God Exists, I met Him, my dear friend, the late André Frossard, had a profound understanding of the power and beauty of this Presence. But one does not have to enter a chapel physically in order to enter the precincts of the Blessed Sacrament spiritually (Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way!, p. 116).*

John Paul II stressed that only those who pray can love their neighbor: *The bishop's interest in another person begins with his conversation with*





*Christ, who entrusts His own to him. Prayer prepares us to meet others. These are meetings in which, thanks to our spiritual openness, we can come to know and understand one another, even when there is little time. I simply pray for everyone day after day. Whenever I meet someone, I immediately pray for that person, and this always helps in my contacts with him. It is hard to say how others perceive this. One would have to ask them. But on principle I accept everyone as a person sent to me by Christ, as someone whom He has at once entrusted to and set upon me (Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way!, p. 58).*

Faith always seeks deeper understanding. For this reason it is also vital that we deepen our religious knowledge by reading good books and Catholic publications. In this connection, John Paul II gives us an invaluable piece of advice: *I have always had the same problem: what should I read? I try to choose what is most important. There is so much material being published. Not everything is worthwhile or useful. One must be selective and seek out good reading matter. I have loved books since I was a child. It was my father who drummed the practice of reading books into my head. He would sit with me and read aloud the whole of Sienkiewicz as well as other Polish writers. When my mother died, there were just the two of us left. Even then, he never stopped encouraging me to read the most valuable works of literature (Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way!, p. 76).*

### Times of trial

Without doubt to persevere in holiness means to be subjected to various trials. John Paul II prepares us for such difficult times: *We will doubtless encounter trials. This is nothing unusual. It is part of the life of faith. These trials may be mild or they may be very severe, even dramatic. In times of trial we may feel as though we are alone, but God's grace, the conquering grace of faith never deserts us. Thus we can triumph over every trial, even the most terrible (Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way!, p.148).*

And here, the Holy Father calls upon us to engage in a fierce struggle with our weaknesses and the powers

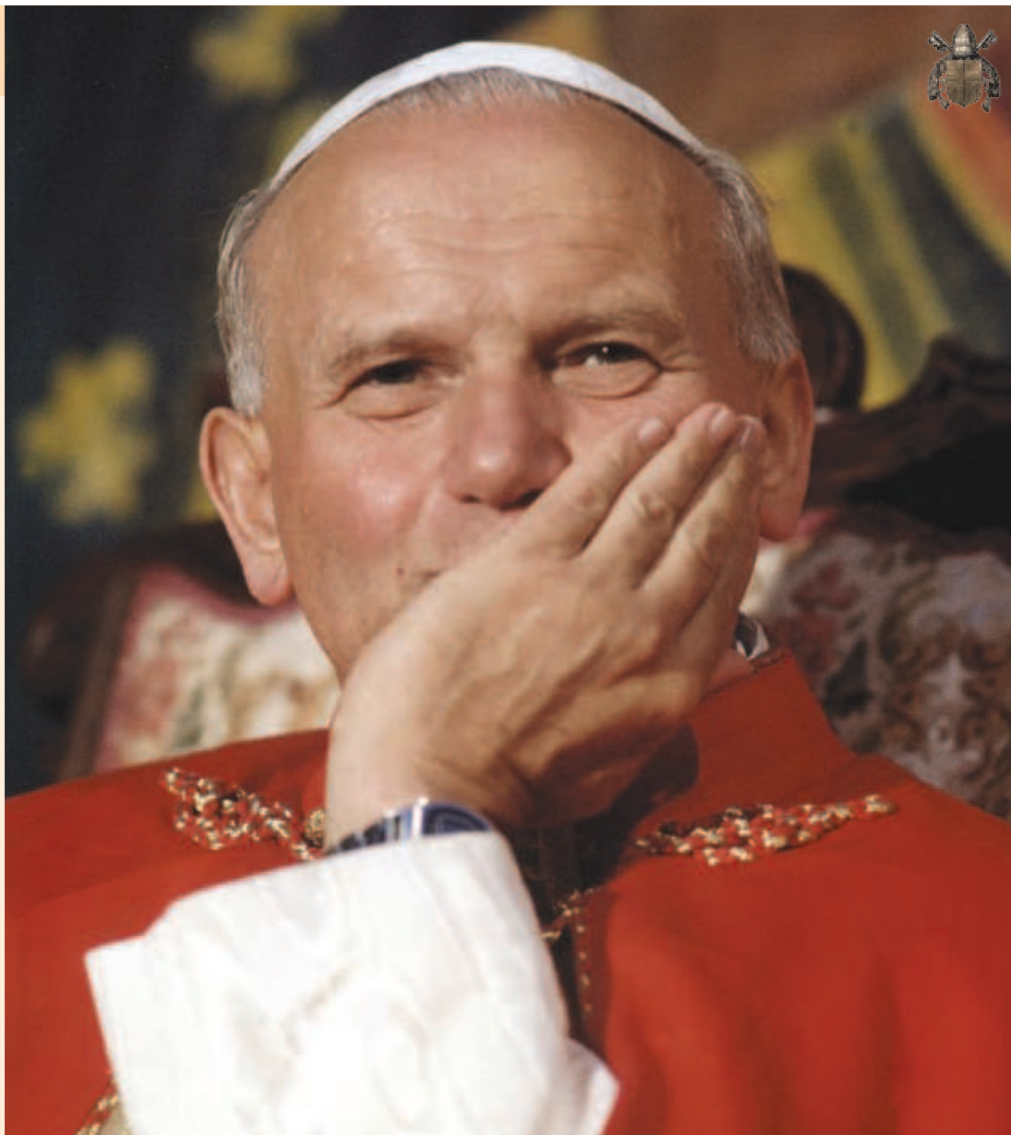


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of evil. He finds a powerful symbol of this dramatic struggle in the Polish army's stoic defense of Westerplatte in September of 1939. That event became a sign of *fidelity in the face of a dramatic trial*. Likewise we must be faithful to Christ, *to the end*, faithful in keeping all the commandments and values of the Gospel. John Paul II appeals to us all: *The cause of 'having more' can never triumph, for then man loses what is most important: his humanity, his conscience, his dignity... You must be demanding of yourselves even if others are not demanding... Every one of you has his own Westerplatte: some task he must undertake and carry out; some worthy cause he cannot fail to defend; some duty or responsibility he cannot avoid. (there can be no question of desertion); finally some order of truths and values that he must preserve and "defend," like Westerplatte, within and around him. Yes, defend! For yourselves and for others (Westerplatte, 12 June, 1987).*

Jesus wants us to be saints. If we respond to His wish and accept the daily effort of living by faith, if we accept the labor of total obedience and cooperation with God's plans, then we become participants in life's most fascinating reality, namely that of becoming a truly free and loving person—that is to say, a saint.

May the teaching and example of Servant of God, John Paul II, persuade us that the call to holiness of every single human being is not only a plain possibility, but a responsibility that flows from the very essence of our humanity, created as it is in the image and likeness of God.

*Do not behave in the way that you liked to before you learned the truth; make a habit of obedience: be holy in all you do, since it is the Holy One who has called you, and scripture says: Be holy, for I am holy (1 Pt 1:14-16.).*

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