



His Holiness Pope John Paul II
Karol Josef Wojtyla
May 18, 1920 - April 2, 2005
Rest in Peace

Mass of Remembrance for Pope John Paul II to be celebrated Saturday

LAKE CHARLES — The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, will be the celebrant and homilist at a special "Mass of Remembrance" for His Holiness Pope John Paul II at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Saturday, April 9, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. All priests, deacons and religious have been invited to attend.

Representative groups from every Catholic Church in the diocese and every Catholic school will also attend. Representatives of other faiths and Civic Officials have been invited as well. This special gathering to pray for the Holy Father is open to all. Members of the general public (no matter what their religious affilia-

tion) who wish to honor the memory and celebrate the good works of this champion of peace and justice are most welcome to attend.

The pastors of all the 38 parishes in the diocese have been asked to celebrate a Mass for the Pope at a time of their choosing during the period of official mourning. They have also been asked to celebrate the traditional "Month's Mind Mass" for the Pontiff one month after his death on Monday, May 2, 2005.

In spite of his profound affection for the Pope Bishop Braxton will not be traveling to Rome to join with bishops from around the world for the celebration of the Liturgy of Christian Burial for the Holy Father on

Friday. The Bishop said, "I would like very much to be personally present for the funeral of our beloved Holy Father. However, I do not want to miss the scheduled confirmations and other pastoral commitments I have in the diocese. I believe that I honor him best by trying to imitate his devotion to his ministry. I think he would want me to remain here with the people he entrusted to my pastoral care and pray with them, grieve with them, and guide them through this momentous transition in the history of the Church."

The Bishop has composed a special prayer for the Pope to be prayed in all the parishes.

A Prayer for Pope John Paul II

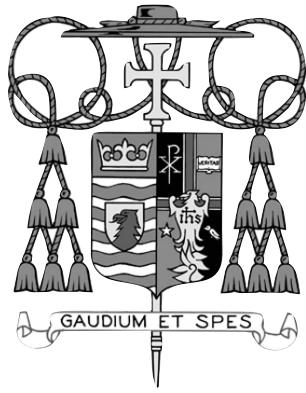
Let Us Pray

All powerful and ever living God, we your people praise you and bless your name. In your Providence you raised up Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II to be Bishop of Rome and Supreme Pastor of your Church. You gave us this Christ-centered man, deeply committed to the priesthood and the Church in an hour when the Church and the world most needed him. You graced him with singular gifts: deep humility, profound spirituality, unshakable faith, brilliant intellect, self-effacing humor, a warm engaging personality, the knowledge of many languages, and an extraordinary will to live and to serve.

You called him to bestride the world like a moral giant proclaiming the Gospel of Life in the face of a culture of death. Throughout his long ministry he never tired of announcing the worth and dignity

of every human person from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. You gave him the courage to confront tyranny, materialism, secularism, anti-Semitism, racism, ethnic bias and prejudice of every kind. You gave him the vision to seek a greater unity among Christians, a deeper respect among religions, a greater rapport between the Church science, the arts and culture. You empowered him to lead us with wisdom across the threshold of faith into the third millennium.

Now that his work here on earth is complete we pray that you will gather him unto Yourself, O Lord. Receive him into the Eternal Life promised by Christ to good and faithful servants. May Blessed Peter and his sainted successors greet him as you give him a share in the joy of the resurrection now and forever. Amen.



April 4, 2005
 37 years since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King

Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, and Religious,
 Dear People of God,

As we mourn the death of our beloved Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, and pray that God will receive him into the mystery of Christ's resurrection, we must also give thanks to Providence for giving us such a remarkable man with such extraordinary gifts at an hour when we needed him most. The death of His Holiness has brought to a close the life of a man who has been a towering presence in the world during the last quarter of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century. History may well call him John Paul the Great.

I, like many priests and bishops, have felt a special bond of affection with him from my first brief encounter in Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago in 1979 (where Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony performed Gustav Mahler for him) to my many subsequent audiences. At my last private audience during my Ad limina in December that bond was stronger than ever.

John Paul was an extremely complex man with singular talents rarely found in one person. He was a dedicated priest fully committed to Jesus Christ and His Church. Like St. Thomas More he seemed to be "a man for all seasons." He gave us courage, "Be not afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ!"

Some commentators have, incorrectly in my judgment, portrayed the Pontiff as a person of dichotomies and contradictions. They have suggested that he brought a "liberal" vision to the secular world and a "conservative" vision to the Church. From his earliest years of study in Poland through his theological studies in Rome and his years as a professor of philosophy in Krakow and his active participation in the Second Vatican Council, he developed a unique integration of philosophy and theology, a kind of "Christian Humanism" if you will, that drew from the Incarnation of Jesus Christ an unswerving belief in the dignity of every human person, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death.

This is the root of his opposition to totalitarian governments, war as a solution to international conflicts, abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty. This same conviction formed his genuine ecumenical outreach to other Christians, his heartfelt expressions of sorrow for the suffering of Jewish people at the hands of Christians, his absolute rejection of racism, ethnic bias or prejudice of any kind, his rapprochement with science, the arts and culture and his invitation to leaders of world religions to gather with him in Assisi in 1984.

The Holy Father's fidelity to scripture, tradition and the magisterium on issues of sexual morality, Catholic doctrine and discipline were not a matter of being a "traditionalist" but of being truly faithful to his Petrine ministry of strengthening his brothers and sisters in their faith. Because of his profound integration of faith and reason he was able to bestride the world as a moral giant proclaiming the Gospel of Life in the face of a culture of death.

A poet and a lover of art and beauty Pope John Paul II might well be remembered as an artist - an artist of faith, an artist of hope, an artist of love, and an artist of service. In his 1999 Easter Sunday Letter to Artists he wrote, "May the beauty which you pass on to generations still to come be such that it will stir them to wonder! Faced with the sacredness of life and of the human person, and before the marvels of the universe, wonder is the only appropriate attitude. Artists of the world, may your many different paths all lead to that infinite Ocean of beauty where wonder becomes awe, exhilaration, and unspeakable joy. May you be guided and inspired by the mystery of the Risen Christ, whom the Church in these days contemplates with joy."

I join with you and all the world in prayer commending this extraordinary Servant of the Servants of God to the God he loved so much and served so well.

*"Now cracks a noble heart.
 Good night sweet prince,
 and flights of angels
 sing thee to thy rest!"*

Prayerfully yours in Christ,

+ Edward K. Braxton

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
 Bishop of Lake Charles
 Bishop-Elect of Belleville

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)

Chrism Mass Homily

By
Bishop Edward K. Braxton
 (First of two parts)
 (Editor's Note: This Homily was given on Wednesday, March 23, 2005, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.)

My Dear members of the College of priests of the Church of Lake Charles, Dear Deacons, Dear People of God:

Each year we have looked forward to gathering in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, for the Chrism Mass, which, as you know, should be celebrated on Holy Thursday, the day of the Lord's Supper, the day of the Eucharist. I am profoundly aware that this Chrism Mass is unique, because it is the last time that I will celebrate the Chrism Mass as Bishop of this Local Church and as head of our Presbyteral College. I am sure that you, like me, are stirred by mixed emotions in the face of this unexpected change in our lives. Let us bring these emotions with us to the altar this afternoon.

When we bless and consecrate the oils to be used in the coming year for baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, anointing the sick, and dedicating new churches, we are reminded in a very profound way that we come to be as the Church through signs, symbols and sacraments. Bread, wine, water, oil, the imposition of hands, the embrace of the greeting of peace, and, in a preeminent way, the eucharistic prayer itself.

Pope John Paul II, whose serious illness and personal suffering fill our hearts with prayerful concern, has declared this to be the Year of the Eucharist. In his letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (Stay With Us Lord) he reminds us of the intimate relationship between the gift of the Eucharist (Christ's Body and Blood) and our identity as members of Christ's mystical body the Church. Writing about the Eucharist, the pontiff quotes these words from the great French Dominican theologian Henri Cardinal De Lubac, "The Eucharist

builds the church and the church makes the Eucharist." They both come to us from Christ and need each other to exist. If we were not the Church there would be no one to celebrate the Eucharist. But without the Eucharist the Church would lack the essential source of her vitality.

Sunday after Sunday, We, the Church of Lake Charles, renew ourselves by returning to the Eucharist, the food of our life of faith. By immersing ourselves in the Eucharist we take on the characteristics of this great mysterium fidei. In the Eucharist, unlike in ordinary eating, that which we eat is not transformed into us. Instead, we are transformed into the One whose Body and Blood we share. Eating at this sacrificial table means letting Christ into our hearts so He can make them like His own. St. Augustine put these words on Christ's lips, "I am your food, but instead of my being changed into you, it is you who will be transformed into me." The French Jesuit paleontologist and mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin saw the transformative power of the Eucharist at a cosmic level, saying, "Kneeling in prayer before the Eucharist I had the sense that the host was mysteriously expanding until at last the whole world had become like a single giant host." Thus reminding us of the connection between the Eucharist and the final glorification of the cosmos in Christ at the end of time.

We hear the scripture readings this afternoon in a new way in the context of the Holy Father's reflections on the Eucharist and the fact that this is our last Chrism Mass together. They refer simultaneously to the priesthood in which we all share thorough baptism and to the ministerial priesthood who are ordained by those who exercised to sacramental ministry.

In the first reading Isaiah, the prophet announces, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. The Lord has anointed me to bring glad

tidings to the lowly. You yourselves shall be named priests of the Lord, you shall be called ministers of our God." He is clearly referring to the priestly character of the children of Israel. But, in faith, we hear it as a prefiguring of the priesthood of the new covenant in Christ.

In the text from Revelation, John declares, "God must be given glory and power forever and ever because He has made us a royal nation of priests in the service of His Father, for ever and ever." We echo this in the Sunday preface, "You have called us to the glory that has made us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart."

St. Luke recounts Jesus' visit to the synagogue in Nazareth where He reads the same passage from Isaiah ("The spirit of the Lord is upon me. The Lord has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the lowly"). Then He boldly states, "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." He makes the same bold statement to us at this Chrism Mass. When I as your bishop work together with you the priests, deacons, religious, and Christian faithful of the church of Southwest Louisiana day after day, through joys and sorrows, successes and failures, to live and proclaim the good news of Christ, then we are acting as God's anointed and the scripture is fulfilled in our hearing, and in the hearing of those we serve, especially our catechumens, candidates for full communion in the church, and our young people about to be confirmed. Year after year as a family of faith, priests, deacons, religious and faithful working together we have experienced the fulfillment of the scriptures in our hearing.

Because I have witnessed this fulfillment of the scriptures in our lives firsthand, there is much I would like to say to the deacons, their wives and all of you. I hope I will be able to do so in the weeks ahead.