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“Putting into the Deep: Understanding and Imitating the Life and Teaching of Blessed John Paul II”

I Introduction

- A. It gives me great joy to be with you today. Blessed John Paul II was very fond of using the expression “school” to refer to the various fonts where we can grow in faith. He spoke about the “school of the family,” the school of the liturgy,” “the school of Mary,” and many other types of schools. Today, we enter together literally into the “school of John Paul II,” not just physically in this school named after him, but hopefully intellectually and existentially. My hope has always been that entering into this institution will be entering into this “school of John Paul II,” a matriculation that for students and teachers will not last for four years or a career but a lifetime. I’ve been studying in this “papal academy” since I was in college more than 20 years ago and there’s still so much to learn.
- B. It’s a particularly blessed time to be entering into this school. Five months ago, John Paul II was beatified in St. Peter’s Square, which is a sign that he has made the eternal honor roll in the school of sanctity, that he lived the Christian life to a heroic degree. And while the beatification of a pope is always of the disciple and not of his pontificate, one of the reasons why people have spontaneously called him “John Paul the Great” is because they recognize, as in the case of the other three popes called “great,” Leo, Gregory and Nicholas — that his pontificate was enormously consequential both inside and outside the Church. And just as in the case of the other great popes in history, the legacy of his witness and his words will live on for centuries as a near inexhaustible source of riches for those who are trying to make their way to God. It’s very much worth the effort to enter his school and to study him and his teaching of the Gospel to the modern world.
- C. It’s obviously a challenge to condense such a heroic life of 84 years and a voluminous 26.5 year pontificate into an hour long talk, but that’s what my task is today.
- D. I’ve entitled the talk, “Putting into the Deep: Understanding and Imitating the Life and Teaching of Blessed John Paul II.”
 1. The Putting into the Deep comes from the motto he chose for the Church for the third Christian millennium in his beautiful exhortation after the Jubilee Year of 2000.
 - a. He wrote at the beginning of that document, “At the beginning of the new millennium, and at the close of the Great Jubilee during which we celebrated the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus and a new stage of the Church's journey begins, our hearts ring out with the words of Jesus when one day, after speaking to the crowds from Simon's boat, he invited the Apostle to "put out into the deep" for a catch: "Duc in altum" (Lk 5:4). Peter and his first companions trusted Christ's words, and cast the nets. "When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish" (Lk 5:6). Duc in altum! These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence.
 - b. He specifically called us to put out into the deep with trust in prayer, in hope, in courage, living the faith and seeking to pass it on.
 - c. He wanted the whole Church to learn from his predecessor St. Peter in his encounter with the Lord at the Sea of Galilee. After a night working hard and catching nothing, after having washed all his nets and getting ready like any third shift worker to head home to get some sleep, this exhausted fisherman was told by Jesus to put out into the deep water and lower his nets for a catch. This was strange advice to come from a carpenter from Nazareth to a professional on the sea of Galilee. It would have been similar to Peter’s telling Jesus to use the handle rather than the head of a hammer when driving in a nail. Fish were caught in the sea of Galilee in shallow water during darkness, not deep water during day light. Yet at Jesus’ word, Peter did as Jesus asked. And we know what happened. There was such a catch of fish that Peter’s nets were at the breaking point. He recognized he was unworthy of such a blessing, begged the Lord to depart

from him because he was a sinful man, but then the Lord said in response, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men!”

- d. The expressions “put out into the deep” and “be not afraid” go together. Because we trust in Jesus, we’re not afraid to do what seems impossible because with him nothing is impossible.
 - e. He finished that encyclical returning to the same image: “Duc in altum! Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work.
- E. John Paul II’s whole life, this whole pontificate, was putting out into the deep at Christ’s words. He recognized that Christ was still at work in his life and in the world and with an incredible generous heart and with boldness he became a tremendous instrument in the Lord’s hands. His whole life featured this recognition and this response.
1. He put out into the deep in his family life.
 - a. At the death of his mother at 8.
 - b. At the death of his brother Edmund a few years later.
 - c. At the death of his father at 20 and being left seemingly all alone.
 2. He put out into the deep with respect to culture.
 - a. Rhapsodic theater, risking his life to perform in the theater under the Nazis.
 - b. He knew he needed to preserve culture, because the faith is passed on through a culture.
 3. He put out into the deep following his personal vocation.
 - a. Entering a clandestine seminary. If he were caught, it could mean the end, just as it was for some of his classmates, classmates he never forgot.
 4. He put out into the deep throughout his priesthood.
 - a. Leading illegal hiking pilgrimages into the mountains
 - b. Writing under various pseudonyms
 - c. Doing so many extra things while he already had much work to do, writing plays, columns, books, teaching, confessing for hours and more.
 5. Putting out into the deep as a bishop
 - a. Constantly challenging the communists who were intransigent in preventing his building churches, who put all other types of obstacles in his way, like preventing his going to Rome to serve on the birth control commission that led to *Humanae Vitae*.
 6. Putting out into the deep as a pope
 - a. Hit the ground running.
 - b. Confronted Communism with the courage of the Gospel.
 - c. Confronted various other dictators, such as in South America.
 - d. Confronted an entrenched Vatican inertia slow to change.
 - e. Confronted head on the fears of men and women today.
 7. He said (CTK) that as a Christian, a priest, a bishop and a pope, he knew that, like Christ before him, he would be a “sign of contradiction.” For him, this involved two truths: “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they keep my word, they will also keep yours” (Jn 15:20). And “Have no fear! Do not be afraid of God’s mystery; do not be afraid of His love; and do not be afraid of man’s weakness or of his grandeur! Man does not cease to be great, not even in his weakness. Do not be afraid of being witnesses to the dignity of every human being, from the moment of conception until death.”
- F. He brought that trust and that heroism to the papacy. It’s impossible to forget his homily that inaugural Mass in which he spoke to a frightened world.
1. He began by focusing on St. Peter’s confession of Christ as the Messiah, which he made his own, and then turned to Christ’s affirmation of Peter as the rock on whom he would build his Church, as he implied Christ was doing for him as well. The responsibilities of the papacy would be enough to frighten anyone, but he stressed for him and the whole Church the need to gain confidence from a living relationship with Christ. Christ, he said, brings the living God “close to men and reveals him”

and “the absolute and yet sweet and gentle power of the Lord responds to the whole depths of the human person, to his loftiest aspirations of intellect, will and heart.”

2. That was the set-up for his famous peroration, perhaps the most famous words of his pontificate: “Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the Pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ's power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind. Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of States, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows "what is in man". He alone knows it. So often today man does not know what is within him, in the depths of his mind and heart. So often he is uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. He is assailed by doubt, a doubt that turns into despair. We ask you therefore, we beg you with humility and trust, let Christ speak to man. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life.”

G. To understand and imitate the life and teaching of Blessed JP II we need first to grasp how everything in his life, everything in his papacy, flowed from his relationship with Christ, from his not being afraid to open the doors of his heart to welcome Christ into the totality of his life, from his confidence that Christ not only has the words of eternal life but is THE answer to the question about what it means to be human, which is the interrogative that plagues the human person most.

1. This the key to understanding Blessed John Paul II. Many over the course of his pontificate and since have failed to grasp this. Scores of journalists and several of his early biographers tried to understand him by focusing on all that he accomplished rather than the motivation that impelled him to do so much; they focused on the abundant fruit of his life and ministry rather than the tree and the sap that flowed within him. He once told George Weigel, who wrote the definite biography of him, *Witness of Hope*, that the problem with many of these biographers and reporters is “they try to understand me from outside. But I can only be understood from inside.” Tad Szulc one of his biographers wrote several hundred pages on Pope John Paul II’s exploits but, when it came to what drove him, he was basically able to write a mere sentence, chocking up everything to what he termed a vague “mysticism.” We’d never be able to understand Blessed John Paul II without understanding his relationship with the Lord, which made his witness so courageous and contagious.
2. This is something the man who would be elected his successor well understood. In the beautiful homily he gave at John Paul’s funeral, Pope Benedict summarized the life and papacy of Blessed John Paul II by saying that first and foremost Karol Wojtyla was a disciple of Jesus Christ. Everything in his life and pontificate can be synthesized by Christ’s command to him, “Follow me!” “This lapidary saying of Christ,” Benedict declared, “can be taken as the key to understanding the message which comes to us from the life of our late beloved Pope John Paul II.”

H. So what I’d like to do in this talk is describe this central aspect of John Paul II’s life, that he was a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ; that everything flowed in his life from his relationship with Christ, his creator and redeemer, and that the program of his priestly, episcopal and papal ministry was to help the rest of us imitate him in this discipleship, allowing Jesus Christ fully to reveal who we are and how we’re loved and how he calls us to follow him along the path of love. This is also the most effective way that we can enter his school, learn from him and imitate him. None of us will likely ever accomplish as much as he did on the historical stage, but John Paul II would be the first one to say that in his discipleship he is most certainly emulable. He’d be the first one to say, echoing St. Paul’s words to the Corinthians, “Imitate me just as I imitate Christ,” “Follow me, just as I follow Christ.”

II Centrality of Christ

- A. So let’s begin with the core idea of the life and teaching of John Paul II, the key to unlocking everything else that he did.
- B. John Paul II obtained a tremendous education and two doctorates, but the greatest theological school he ever attended, the deepest intellectual experience he ever had, was the Second Vatican Council, in which he participated as a bishop and archbishop from 1962-1965. He later called it the “seminary of the Holy Spirit” and a “unique occasion for listening to others and for creative thinking.” Because he was one of the youngest bishops in the world when it began, he did more listening than speaking at the beginning, but by the end of the Council, he, a fast learner, was clearly one of the intellectual leaders.

- C. To understand the man who became Pope John Paul II from the inside involves climbing into his head during this very important formational experience.
- D. I actually had the chance to do this. As George Weigel was doing his research on *Witness to Hope* at the North American College where I was a seminarian, he asked me to translate for him all of the Bishop Wojtyla's written or oral interventions at the Second Vatican Council. It was a great assignment to put my words into the future pope's mouth!
- E. In preparation for Vatican II, he wrote a document for the ante-preparatory commission that said that the biggest issue facing the Church was not reforming its own house but to give an adequate response to the yearnings, questions and provisional answers of the human person today. In the chaos that was coming from all of the "isms" of the 20th century — not just Nazism and Communism, but materialism, hedonism, individualism, relativism, atheism — modern man wanted to know whether Christian humanism was different from all the other humanisms out there, whether it had a real answer to the problem of modern despair. Everything in the Council, he said, should be organized according to this framework. He didn't persuade those in charge of the Council to accept his ideas *in toto*, but he remained convinced throughout the Council and beyond that the Church needed an adequate anthropology, an adequate understanding of the human person, to propose to the Augustines of the modern world, who like St. Augustine 16 centuries before, were seeking to find peace for their restless hearts in all types of false answers. Wojtyla knew their hearts would only be able to find rest in God.
- F. While he didn't get the whole Council framed according to this schema, in the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, which was dedicated to the Church's positive articulation of the Gospel in response to modern anxieties, now-Archbishop Wojtyla played an enormous role in the formulation of this authentic Christian humanism. This hinged on two passages, which would eventually become the two most cited Vatican II passages of his papacy, because they dominated his thought:
1. GS 22 — The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. ... By the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, [Christ] fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. ... All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery. Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us.
 2. GS 24 — Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself..
- G. He said in 1993 (CTK). "I had long been interested in man as a person. ... Then, when I discovered my priestly vocation, man became the central theme of my pastoral work, answering questions of young people about how to live, work, and respond to the isms. (Personalistic principle) The human person is one to whom the only worthy response is love. Then GS 24. Here we truly have an adequate interpretation of the commandment of love. ... At the same time, the Council emphasizes that the most important thing about love is the sincere gift of self. In this sense the person is realized through love. ... Man affirms himself completely by giving of himself. This is the fulfillment of the commandment of love. This is also the full truth about man, a truth that Christ taught us by His life.
- H. These two passages provide a key to understanding his life and his pontificate.
1. Life
 - a. His understanding of himself and of the human person came from Christ.
 - b. He saw his great dignity. His call to communion with Christ.
 - c. Theological anthropology.
 - d. He saw the centrality of Christ-like agapic love in all actions, which he poured out for young people, for engaged couples, for his parishioners, students, diocesan faithful and eventually the entire flock of Christ.

2. When he was elected the 263rd successor of St. Peter, these two related ideas became the program of his pontificate, which was encapsulated in his first encyclical entitled, *Christ, the Redeemer of Man*.”
 3. He said, in *Redemptor Hominis*, that when he accepted in a spirit of obedience in faith the papacy, it was to give a response to the fundamental question of how we could grow closer to Christ as we approached the third millennium. “To this question... a fundamental and essential response must be given.” “Our response must be: Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is-towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ, the Redeemer of man. We wish to look towards him —because there is salvation in no one else but him, the Son of God — repeating what Peter said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." By his incarnation, life, teachings and particularly his suffering and death, Christ reveals [who God is:] that God is love. “In man’s history, this revelation of love and mercy has taken a form and a name: Jesus Christ.”
 4. That leads to the moral consequence. In one of the most beautiful passages in any of his papal writings, he wrote, “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer "fully reveals man to himself". ... In this [human] dimension man finds again the greatness, dignity and value that belong to his humanity. In the mystery of the Redemption man becomes newly "expressed" and, in a way, is newly created. He is newly created! ... The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly-and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being-he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must "appropriate" and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deep wonder at himself. How precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he "gained so great a Redeemer" and if God "gave his only Son "in order that man "should not perish but have eternal life."
 5. In reality, the name for that deep amazement at man's worth and dignity is the Gospel, that is to say: the Good News. It is also called Christianity. This amazement determines the Church's mission in the world and, perhaps even more so, "in the modern world". This amazement, which is also a conviction and a certitude-at its deepest root it is the certainty of faith, but in a hidden and mysterious way it vivifies every aspect of authentic humanism-is closely connected with Christ. It also fixes Christ's place-so to speak, his particular right of citizenship-in the history of man and mankind.
- I. The Holy Father would write in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* In his 1994 book he responded to questions from a journalist, about how this message of *Redemptor Hominis* was within him before he was elected to the papacy and indicated both his theological vision and his pastoral style.
 1. My first encyclical on the Redeemer of man (*Redemptor Hominis*) appeared a few months after my election on October 16, 1978. This means that I was actually carrying its contents *within me*. I had only to “copy” from memory and experience what I had already been living on the threshold of the papacy. I emphasize this because the encyclical represents a confirmation, on the one hand, of the *tradition of the schools* from which I came and, on the other hand, of the *pastoral style* reflected in this encyclical. The Council proposed, especially in *Gaudium et Spes*, that the mystery of redemption should be seen in light of the great renewal of man and of all that is human. The encyclical aims to be a *great hymn of joy for the fact that man has been redeemed through Christ* — redeemed in spirit and in body. This redemption of the body subsequently found its own expression in the series of catecheses for the Wednesday Papal audiences: *Male and female He created them*.” Perhaps it would be better to say: “Male and Female he Redeemed them.”
 - J. So this was what was “inside” Wojtyła, what he carried “within him,” what he copied from memory and experience and life into not just his encyclical but his famous TOB. These were the two central truths

which he put out into the deep as a disciple and an apostle —what Christ reveals about God, about man, about man’s dignity, and how Christ reveals we should respond — and what he encouraged all of us in the Church to do similarly without being afraid.

- K. He put vision of how Christ reveals himself to us and how we’re supposed to respond by giving of ourselves in love into practice in his person and in his teaching.
- L. I’d first like to mention how he acted on it personally. There would be many ways to illustrate it, but I’d like to do it with some stories of my own interaction with him.
 1. Many had the experience when they met him of seeming like the only person in the room. This was intentional.
 - a. RLU: The good shepherd knows his sheep and they know him. A bishop should try to ensure that as many as possible of those who, together with him, make up the local Church can come to know him personally. He for his part will seek to be close to them, to know about their lives, what gives joy to their hearts and what saddens them. Such mutual acquaintance cannot be built through occasional meetings. It comes from a genuine interest in what is happening in their lives regardless of age, social status, or nationality, whether they are close at hand or far away. ... I was greatly helped in this by the study of personalism... Every being is an individual person and therefore I cannot program a priori a certain type of relationship that could be applied to everyone, but I must, so to speak, learn it anew in every case.
 - b. RLU: “I never felt that I was meeting an excessive number of people. Nonetheless, I was always concerned to safeguard the personal quality of each relationship. Every person is a chapter to himself. I always acted with this conviction, but I realize that it is something you can’t learn. It is simply there, because it comes from within. Interest in others begins with the ... prayer life. His conversations with Christ who entrusts ‘his own’ to him. Prayer prepares him for the encounter with others. In such meetings, if we are truly open, we can come to know and understand one another, even when there is little time. I simply pray for everyone every day. As soon as I meet people, I pray for them, and this helps me in all my relationships. ... I always follow this principle: I welcome everyone as a person sent to me and entrusted to me by Christ.”
 2. I was very fortunate to have been sent by then Bishop Sean O’Malley to prepare for the priesthood at the North American College in Rome, and during my five-plus years of study, I had the incredible privilege to study, pray and live a stone’s throw from the living rock from Poland on whom Christ was continuing to build up his Church. I had the chance to be with him to celebrate Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, to be with him at catechetical audiences, Masses and speeches, to rejoice with him at many beatifications and canonizations, to accompany him in the streets during Corpus Christi Processions, pray the Rosary with him before images of Our Lady in the Vatican Gardens. I also had the chance to meet him. Meeting him once would have been the thrill of a lifetime. Meeting him twice would have been much more than I could have merited or dreamed. But I had the chance 11 times to meet him personally and talk with him briefly. I’d like to share a few things from some of those meetings with you, because I think they help to describe the man about whom you’ll be focusing the entire year.
 3. The first time was a few months into my first theology year. I had written the pope’s personal secretary, then Msgr. Stanislaw Dziwisz, on behalf of a couple from Texas whose parents had given much of the money to Pope Pius XII to excavate the necropolis underneath St. Peter’s basilica that led to the rediscovery of St. Peter’s tomb. There was a mix-up at the Papal Apartment, however, and the Maltese Sister at the Vatican switchboard called to say, the day that the couple flew back to the United States, that they were to report to the bronze doors the following morning for the private Mass with the Holy Father. I explained to the Sister the situation and — putting out into the deep with a little bit of trepidation — asked whether, considering there were now two open spots, whether my twin brother and I would be able to come to the Mass. My identical twin, Scot, was a first theologian for the Diocese of Bridgeport at the NAC as well. The sister said she would have to check with Msgr. Dziwisz, but called back in 15 minutes to say that that would be okay. So we attended the Mass at the end of which we went into the large papal library where we lined up around the periphery waiting for the Pope to come to greet everyone individually. Scot and I were staying

toward the end of the line, in our identical cassocks, our identical glass frames and our identical short haircuts. Msgr. Dziwisz kept looking in our direction as he came — which is something, I have to confess, that Scot and I were used to as identical twins, wherever we go. When he got to us, the papal secretary said, “Siete veramente gemelli,” “You guys are really twins,” which is something the Holy Father picked up on as well. It was frankly difficult to be holding the hands of the Holy Father as he continues to go from one face to another to see if there were any means by which he could tell us apart. He began to ask us a few questions about where we were from and whether we had other family members. Then he asked whether we ever played tricks on our rector, seminary professors, fellow students and bishops. It was a direct question in the presence of the successor of St. Peter, so Scot and I, blurted out together, “sempre!” The fact that identical twins answered the same question in the exact way at exactly the same time made the Holy Father, Msgr. Dziwisz and all the others who understood Italian all begin to laugh with us. The Holy Father tapped us on the cheeks, said “Bravi” and then “gemelli americani” and moved on. But it was a really providential occurrence, because while the Pope and his secretary normally would meet a multitude of visitors every day that no one could possibly keep track of, because of the rarity of the spectacle and a funny first impression, they did know who the “gemelli americani” were. Even after Scot ended up discerning to leave the seminary and eventually get married, I continued to introduce myself whenever I’d write to the household as one of the American twins and they’d regularly ask about how my twin brother was doing.

4. One of the most touching times I met him was when I was able to introduce my parents to him a few months after my priestly ordination. My parents would come every February when the plane fares were cheap in order to visit and ostensibly celebrate my birthday. Every year I’d write the household to see if it were possible for a Mass, and each year I would get a courteous reply that there were too many bishops or other in town and that it wasn’t possible. We struck out the first four years. In the meantime I had been up there several more times with other guests, but never with my folks. So when they were coming the last time, I sent the letter to then Archbishop Dziwisz, recounting how we’ve tried in the past to no avail and asking if this year it would be possible. Because it was February of the Jubilee Year of 2000, and so many guests were coming to town, I thought the odds were infinitesimal. So I decided to take a gamble in the letter, based on the Gospel, and see if Msgr. Dziwisz, who like the Pope had a great sense of humor, would respond. In the last paragraph, I began to gently plead with him, saying that, for all her wonderful qualities, my mother really is the personification of the importune woman in the 18th Chapter of St. Luke’s Gospel and that unless some way were found possible for my parents and me to attend the Mass with the Holy Father, I feared that she would never let him hear the end of it! If he didn’t take the joke well, I figured, at least he couldn’t quash my priestly ordination! I faxed the letter and dropped it by the apartment. Two days later I was called by the Maltese sister at the switchboard. “Non è possibile,” she said, “It’s not possible for us to attend the Mass.” My heart sunk a little, but I was about to thank her, when I heard her giggling. I asked her what was funny. She said, “Well, Eccellenza, meaning Archbishop Dziwisz said that you and your parents could come to a special audience with a Polish cultural group on February 20 and you could introduce them to the Holy Father then. When the time arrived, and Archbishop Dziwisz recognized me and my parents at the end of the line, he came by, told me, “Ci è piaciuta molto la tua carta.” “We really liked your letter,” then he said he wanted to meet this “donna di preghiera, di fede, ed di insistenza,” “woman of prayer, faith and perseverance — my mother had no idea of what I put in the letter — and then told us we would have a few minutes after all the members of the group had finished to meet the Holy Father. He told me that we would not be in a rush. The Holy Father greeted us warmly, thanked my parents for raising and giving the Church a priest, and asked them several other questions. I glanced over at my father — a real man’s man — and saw that he was crying. Toward the end I told the holy father that my folks were celebrating their 30th anniversary and asked whether it would be possible for them to receive a special blessing. “Volontieri!” or “willingly” he said. Then he turned to me — this was the first time I had seen him after my priestly ordination — and said, “Ed adesso un benedizione per l’altro nuovo padre della

famiglia!” “And now a blessing for the other, new father of the family!” There was something about spiritual paternity right then, right there.

5. The last time I met him was about seven months before he died. I was guiding a pilgrimage by the Acton Institute to Rome and we received the opportunity to meet the Holy Father after one of the Wednesday audiences. I brought the group around the chair at which he was sitting and Archbishop James Harvey introduced us as a group to him briefly. He looked at me and said, “Gemello Americano.” I knelt down on the side of his chair as we were preparing for the photographers from L’Osservatore Romano and Felici’s to take their photos. As the cameras were snapping, I felt someone put his hand on my head. While still faking a smile, I inwardly was wondering what idiot on my group was trying to goof off during photos with the Holy Father. I anticipated that the person was probably making V-signs and all types of other irreverent gestures. The photos stopped. And I began to get up to give a teacher’s stare at the malefactor. But when I turned around, I noticed that the hand was attached to a white cassock. Stunned at the identity of the joker, and dumbfounded about how a man stricken with Parkinson’s would have even been able to reach me where I was kneeling, I simply blurted out, doubtless all types of protocol, “Santità, che ha significato quello?” “Holiness, what did *that* mean?” He looked at me straight in the eyes and said, “Un giorno saprai.” “One day you’ll know.” I kissed his ring for the last time and left. I still haven’t figured out what that meant. My priest friends all joke that it was a paternal gesture to pray that my dead hair follicles receive a miraculous resurrection — that the Pope was using me as a type of clerical chia-pet — but since that time there has been no new papally-induced hair growth, so we’re going to need another miracle for his beatification. Deep down inside, I’ve always prayed and hoped that, in the gesture of a laying on of hands, I, like Elisha from Elijah, was received a portion of John Paul II’s spirit to be able to enter into the full revelation of Christ’s love and join his total gift of self as a priest, making my own his words, “this is my body given for you.”

III Enough of the stories! In the third “movement” of this talk, I’d like to look at the rest of his pontificate so that we can see how this dual understanding coming from the encounter with Christ who reveals God and man to man and shows him how to live and love affects how what he taught about how to live in all the major themes of his pontificate. He kept coming back to the theme in almost every major emphasis of his pontificate. We don’t have time to do a survey that’s adequate in breadth or depth — that’s why you’ll have a year long series! — but I’d like to introduce how he does it with ten of the major themes of his pontificate.

(One) About God

- A. God the Father (Encyclical "Dives in Misericordia" (God the Father, Rich in Mercy), November 30, 1980)
 1. Man cannot be manifested in the full dignity of his nature without reference--not only on the level of concepts but also in an integrally existential way--to God. Man and man's lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love... The more the church's mission is centered upon man--the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric--the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father. While the various currents of human thought both in the past and at the present have tended and still tend to separate theocentrism and anthropocentrism, and even to set them in opposition to each other, the church, following Christ, seeks to link them up in human history in a deep and organic way. And this is also one of the basic principles, perhaps the most important one, of the teaching of the last council. [The study of God and the study of man go together, in Christ]
- B. God the Holy Spirit (Encyclical "Dominum et Vivificantem" (Holy Spirit, Lord and Vivifier), May 18, 1986)
 1. Man's intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit also enables him to understand himself, his own humanity, in a new way. Thus that image and likeness of God which man is from his very beginning is fully realized. This intimate truth of the human being has to be continually rediscovered in the light of Christ, who is the prototype of the relationship with God. There also has to be rediscovered in Christ the reason for "full self-discovery through a sincere gift of himself" to others.... The effective knowledge and full implementation of this truth of his being come about

only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Man learns this truth from Jesus Christ and puts it into practice in his own life by the power of the Spirit, whom Jesus himself has given to us.

(Two) On Mary (Encyclical "Redemptoris Mater" (Mary, Mother of the Redeemer), March 25, 1987)

- A. If it is true, as the Council itself proclaims, that "only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light," then this principle must be applied in a very particular way to that exceptional "daughter of the human race," that extraordinary "woman" who became the Mother of Christ. Only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery fully made clear.
- B. For every Christian, for every human being, Mary is the one who first "believed," and precisely with her faith as Spouse and Mother she wishes to act upon all those who entrust themselves to her as her children. And it is well known that the more her children persevere and progress in this attitude, the nearer Mary leads them to the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8). And to the same degree they recognize more and more clearly the dignity of man in all its fullness and the definitive meaning of his vocation, for "Christ...fully reveals man to man himself.
- C. Consecration to Christ through Mary. This gift of oneself in her consecration to her Son, in his consecration to the Father.
- D. On the Rosary (Apostolic Letter "Rosarium Virginis Mariae," October 16, 2002)
 1. What JP II called his "favorite prayer"
 2. A means to contemplate Christ and contemplate man as he really is.
 3. In the light of what has been said so far on the mysteries of Christ, it is not difficult to go deeper into this anthropological significance of the Rosary, which is far deeper than may appear at first sight. Anyone who contemplates Christ through the various stages of his life cannot fail to perceive in him the truth about man. This is the great affirmation of the Second Vatican Council which I have so often discussed in my own teaching since the Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis: "it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man is seen in its true light". The Rosary helps to open up the way to this light. Following in the path of Christ, in whom man's path is "recapitulated", revealed and redeemed, believers come face to face with the image of the true man. Contemplating Christ's birth, they learn of the sanctity of life; seeing the household of Nazareth, they learn the original truth of the family according to God's plan; listening to the Master in the mysteries of his public ministry, they find the light which leads them to enter the Kingdom of God; and following him on the way to Calvary, they learn the meaning of salvific suffering. Finally, contemplating Christ and his Blessed Mother in glory, they see the goal towards which each of us is called, if we allow ourselves to be healed and transformed by the Holy Spirit. It could be said that each mystery of the Rosary, carefully meditated, sheds light on the mystery of man.

(Three) Family

- A. TOB (1979-1984)
 1. Nuptial meaning of the body and of the person.
 2. The person is formed in the image of the divine giver, called to enter into a loving communion of persons through the gift of oneself to another and receiving the other's personal gift.
 3. Happens in the spousal reality of virginity or celibacy for the sake of the kingdom and in the sacrament of marriage, in which the words of consent and total self-gift are enfleshed.
 4. Life according to the HS helps one recover this purity of the original vision of the gift and helps one actually to give of oneself to God (virginal meaning of the body) and to others.
- B. Letter to Families, February 2, 1994
 1. When a man and woman in marriage mutually give and receive each other in the unity of "one flesh", the logic of the sincere gift of self becomes a part of their life. Without this, marriage would be empty; whereas a communion of persons, built on this logic, becomes a communion of parents. When they transmit life to the child, a new human "thou" becomes a part of the horizon of the "we" of the spouses, a person whom they will call by a new name,... The process from conception and growth in the mother's womb to birth makes it possible to create a space within which the new creature can be revealed as a "gift": indeed this is what it is from the very beginning. Could this frail

and helpless being, totally dependent upon its parents and completely entrusted to them, be seen in any other way? The newborn child gives itself to its parents by the very fact of its coming into existence. Its existence is already a gift, the first gift of the Creator to the creature. It is the Gospel truth concerning the gift of self, without which the person cannot "fully find himself", which makes possible an appreciation of how profoundly this "sincere gift" is rooted in the gift of God, Creator and Redeemer, and in the "grace of the Holy Spirit" which the celebrant during the Rite of Marriage prays will be "poured out" on the spouses. Without such an "outpouring", it would be very difficult to understand all this and to carry it out as man's vocation. Yet how many people understand this intuitively! Many men and women make this truth their own, coming to discern that only in this truth do they encounter "the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6). Without this truth, the life of the spouses and of the family will not succeed in attaining a fully human meaning.

C. Apostolic Exhortation "Familiaris Consortio," December 15, 1981

1. Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: If the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally. The only "place" in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself, which only in this light manifests its true meaning.
2. The family, which is founded and given life by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives. Its first task is to live with fidelity the reality of communion in a constant effort to develop an authentic community of persons. The inner principle of that task, its permanent power and its final goal, is love: Without love the family is not a community of persons and, in the same way, without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons. What I wrote in the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* applies primarily and especially within the family as such: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it." The love between husband and wife and, in a derivatory and broader way, the love between members of the same family--between parents and children, brothers and sisters and relatives and members of the household--is given life and sustenance by an unceasing inner dynamism leading the family to ever deeper and more intense communion, which is the foundation and soul of the community of marriage and the family.
3. Being rooted in the personal and total self-giving of the couple and being required by the good of the children, the indissolubility of marriage finds its ultimate truth in the plan that God has manifested in his revelation: He wills and he communicates the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the church.
4. When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as "arbiters" of the divine plan and they "manipulate" and degrade human sexuality and with it themselves and their married partner by altering its value of "total" self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life, but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality. When, instead, by means of recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are

acting as "ministers" of God's plan and they "benefit from" their sexuality according to the original dynamism of "total" self-giving, without manipulation or alteration.

5. The family is the first and fundamental school of social living: As a community of love, it finds in self-giving the law that guides it and makes it grow. The self-giving that inspires the love of husband and wife for each other is the model and norm for the self-giving that must be practiced in the relationships between brothers and sisters and the different generations living together in the family.
6. Education in love as self-giving is also the indispensable premise for parents called to give their children a clear and delicate sex education. Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person--body, emotions and soul--and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.

(Four) On the dignity of women (Apostolic Letter, "Mulieris Dignitatem", August 15, 1990)

- A. The human being--both male and female--is the only being in the world which God willed for its own sake. The human being is a person, a subject who decides for himself. At the same time, man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self." ... This truth about the person also opens up the path to a full understanding of women's motherhood. Motherhood is the fruit of the marriage union of a man and woman, of that biblical "knowledge" which corresponds to the "union of the two in one flesh" (cf. Gen 2:24). This brings about--on the woman's part--a special "gift of self," as an expression of that spousal love whereby the two are united to each other so closely that they become "one flesh."... This mutual gift of the person in marriage opens to the gift of a new life, a new human being, who is also a person in the likeness of his parents. Motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman's "part." In this openness, in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman "discovers herself through a sincere gift of self." The gift of interior readiness to accept the child and bring it into the world is linked to the marriage union, which--as mentioned earlier--should constitute a special moment in the mutual self-giving both by the woman and the man.
- B. A woman's dignity is closely connected with the love that she receives by the very reason of her femininity; it is likewise connected with the love which she gives in return. The truth about the person and about love is thus confirmed. With regard to the truth about the person, we must turn again to the Second Vatican Council: "Man, who is the only creature on earth that God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self." This applies to every human being, as a person created in God's image, whether man or woman. This ontological affirmation also indicates the ethical dimension of a person's vocation. Woman can only find herself by giving love to others.
- C. Letter to women (June 29, 1990)
 1. The church sees in Mary the highest expression of the "feminine genius," and she finds in her a source of constant inspiration. Mary called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38). Through obedience to the word of God she accepted her lofty yet not easy vocation as wife and mother in the family of Nazareth. Putting herself at God's service, she also put herself at the service of others: a service of love. ... Man is the only creature on earth "which God willed for its own sake," as the Second Vatican Council teaches; it significantly adds that man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self" ("Gaudium et Spes," 24). The maternal "reign" of Mary consists in this. She who was, in all her being, a gift for her Son has also become a gift for the sons and daughters of the whole human race, awakening profound trust in those who seek her guidance along the difficult paths of life on the way to their definitive and transcendent destiny. Each one reaches this final goal by fidelity to his or her own vocation; this goal provides meaning and direction for the earthly labors of men and women alike.
 2. Necessary emphasis should be placed on the "genius of women," not only by considering great and famous women of the past or present, but also those ordinary women who reveal the gift of their womanhood by placing themselves at the service of others in their everyday lives. For in giving

themselves to others each day, women fulfill their deepest vocation. Perhaps more than men, women acknowledge the person, because they see persons with their hearts.

(Five) On Young People and Youth

- A. CTK: "My most memorable experience during that period, when my pastoral activities concentrated above all on the youth was the discovery of the fundamental importance of youth. What is youth? It is not only a period of life that corresponds to a certain number of years, it is also a time given by Providence to every person and given to him as a responsibility. During that time, he searches, like the young man in the Gospel, for answers to basic questions; he searches not only for the meaning of life but also for a concrete way to go about living his life. This is the most fundamental characteristic of youth. Every mentor, beginning with parents, let alone every pastor, must be aware of this characteristic and must know how to identify it in every boy and girl. I will say more: He must love this fundamental aspect of youth."
- B. "If at every stage of his life man desires to be his own person, to find love, during his youth he desires it even more strongly. ... They need guides and they want them close at hand. If they turn to authority figures, they do so because they see in them a wealth of human warmth and a willingness to walk with them along the paths they are following."
- C. "Clearly then the fundamental problem of youth is profoundly personal. In life, youth is when we come to know ourselves. It is also a time of communion. Young people, whether boys or girls, know they must live for and with others, they know that their life has meaning to the extent that it becomes a free gift of self for others. Here is the origin of all vocations... It is this vocation to love that naturally allows us to draw close to the young. As a priest I realized this very early. I felt almost an inner call in this direction. It is necessary to prepare young people for marriage. It is necessary to teach them to love. ... As a young priest, I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood — my ministry in the pulpit, in the confessional and also in my writing. If one loves human love there naturally arises the need to commit oneself completely to the service of "fair love," because love is fair, it is beautiful. Young people are always searching for the beauty in love. They want their love to be beautiful. If they give in to weakness, following models of behavior that can rightly be considered a scandal in the contemporary world, in the depths of their hearts they still desire a beautiful and pure love. ... Ultimately they know that only God can give them this love. As a result, they are willing to follow Christ, without caring about the sacrifices this may entail."
- D. About encounters with young people he went on to say, "Actually, in truth, it is not the Pope who is being sought out at all. The one being sought out is Christ, who knows "that which is in every man" (Jn 2:25), especially in a young person, and who can give true answers to his questions. And even if they are demanding answers, the young are not afraid of them; more to the point, they await them."
- E. "I would like to sum up by stressing that the young are searching for God, they are searching for the meaning of life, they are searching for definitive answers: 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' In this search, they cannot help but encounter the Church and the Church cannot help but encounter the young. The only necessity is that the Church have a profound understanding of what it means to be young, of the importance that youth has for every person. It is also necessary that the young know the Church, that they perceive Christ in the Church. Christ who walks through the centuries alongside each generation, alongside every person. He walks alongside each person as a friend. An important day in a young person's life is the day on which he becomes convinced that this is the only Friend who will not disappoint him, on whom he can always count."

(Six) On the defense and promotion of human life (Encyclical "Evangelium Vitae" (The value and inviolability of human life), March 25, 1995)

- A. The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel. For this reason, man--living man--represents the primary and fundamental way for the Church. ... The first and fundamental step towards this cultural transformation consists in forming consciences with regard to the incomparable and inviolable worth of every human life. It is of the greatest importance to re-establish the essential connection between life and freedom. These are

inseparable goods: where one is violated, the other also ends up being violated. There is no true freedom where life is not welcomed and loved; and there is no fullness of life except in freedom. Both realities have something inherent and specific which links them inextricably: the vocation to love. Love, as a sincere gift of self, is what gives the life and freedom of the person their truest meaning.

(Seven) Priesthood and priestly formation (Apostolic Exhortation, “Pastores Dabo Vobis,” March 25, 1992)

- A. Human maturity, and in particular affective maturity, requires a clear and strong training in freedom which expresses itself in convinced and heartfelt obedience to the "truth" of one's own being, to the "meaning" of one's own existence, that is to the "sincere gift of self" as the way and fundamental content of the authentic realization of self. Thus understood, freedom requires the person to be truly master of himself, determined to fight and overcome the different forms of selfishness and individualism which threaten the life of each one, ready to open out to others, generous in dedication and service to one's neighbor. This is important for the response that will have to be given to the vocation, and in particular to the priestly vocation, and for faithfulness to it and to the commitments connected with it, even in times of difficulty.
- B. PDV: 57. The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the Good Shepherd.... The Council's Decree "Optatam Totius" states so clearly when speaking of Major Seminaries: "The whole training of the students should have as its object to make them <true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd.> Hence, they should be trained for the ministry of the word so that they may gain an ever increasing understanding of the revealed word of God, making it their own by meditation, and giving it expression in their speech and in their lives. They should be trained for the ministry of worship and sanctification, so that by prayer and the celebration of the sacred liturgical functions they may carry on the work of salvation through the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. They should be trained to undertake the ministry of the shepherd, that they may know how to represent Christ to humanity, Christ who 'did not come to have service done to him but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for the lives of many' (Mk 10:45; Jn 13:12-17), and that they may win over many by becoming the servants of all.

(Eight) On human suffering (Apostolic Exhortation, “Salvifici Doloris,” February 11, 1984)

- A. CTK: “God is always on the side of the suffering. His omnipotence is manifested precisely in the fact that He freely accepted suffering. He could have chosen not to do so. He could have chosen to demonstrate His Omnipotence even at the moment of his Crucifixion. In fact, it was proposed to him.... Yet, God is Love and precisely for this He gave His Son, to reveal Himself completely as Love. Christ is the one who loved to the end.... The man of suffering is the revelation of that Love that “endures all things”, of that Love that is the “greatest.” It is the relation not only that God is love but also the One who “pours out love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”
- B. SD 28-29: A Good Samaritan is one who brings help in suffering, whatever its nature may be, help which is, as far as possible, effective. He puts his whole heart into it, nor does he spare material means. We can say that he gives himself, his very "I," opening this "I" to the other person. Here we touch upon one of the key points of all Christian anthropology. Man cannot "fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." A Good Samaritan is the person capable of exactly such a gift of self. Following the parable of the Gospel, we could say that suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order to unleash love in the human person, that unselfish gift of one's "I" on behalf of other people, especially those who suffer. The world of human suffering unceasingly calls for, so to speak, another world: the world of human love; and in a certain sense man owes to suffering that unselfish love which stirs in his heart and actions. The person who is a "neighbor" cannot indifferently pass by the suffering of another: this in the name of fundamental human solidarity, still more in the name of love of neighbor. He must "stop," "sympathize," just like the Samaritan of the Gospel parable. The parable in itself expresses a deeply Christian truth, but one that at the same time is

very universally human. It is not without reason that, also in ordinary speech, any activity on behalf of the suffering and needy is called "Good Samaritan" work. (28-29)

(Nine) On the missionary dimension of Catholics in the world and the new evangelization (Encyclical "Redemptoris Missio" (The mission), December 7, 1990.)

- A. Christ not only proclaimed the kingdom, but in him the kingdom itself became present and was fulfilled. This happened not only through his words and his deeds: "Above all,...the kingdom is made manifest in the very person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who came 'to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mk 10:45)." The kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but it is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God. If the kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the kingdom of God which he revealed. The result is a distortion of the meaning of the kingdom, which runs the risk of being transformed into a purely human or ideological goal, and a distortion of the identity of Christ, who no longer appears as the Lord to whom everything must one day be subjected.
- B. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in a December 2000 address. He said: "At the beginning of His public life Jesus says: I have come to evangelize the poor (Lk 4:18); this means: I have the response to your fundamental question; I will show you the path of life, the path towards happiness – rather: I am that path." He responds to the deepest poverty, which is the "tediousness of a life considered absurd and contradictory," a life without joy that produces the inability to love, produces jealousy, avarice, and other destructive responses to the lack of meaning. "This is why we are in need of a new evangelization: if the art of living remains and unknown, nothing else works."

(Ten) On Holiness (Apostolic Exhortation Novo Millennio Ineunte, 2001)

- A. He beatified 1,338 and canonized another 482 men and women boys and girls, more than all his predecessors combined in the five previous centuries.
- B. I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness. ... It is necessary therefore to rediscover the full practical significance of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, dedicated to the "universal call to holiness". The Council Fathers laid such stress on this point, not just to embellish ecclesiology with a kind of spiritual veneer, but to make the call to holiness an intrinsic and essential aspect of their teaching on the Church. The rediscovery of the Church as "mystery", or as a people "gathered together by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit", was bound to bring with it a rediscovery of the Church's "holiness", understood in the basic sense of belonging to him who is in essence the Holy One, the "thrice Holy" (cf. Is 6:3). To profess the Church as holy means to point to her as the Bride of Christ, for whom he gave himself precisely in order to make her holy (cf. Eph 5:25-26). This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized. (Receiving Christ's nuptial gift). But the gift in turn becomes a task, which must shape the whole of Christian life: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Th 4:3). It is a duty which concerns not only certain Christians: "All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity" ... to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: "Do you wish to receive Baptism?" means at the same time to ask them: "Do you wish to become holy?" It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). As the Council itself explained, this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few "uncommon heroes" of holiness. The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction. It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and

call for a genuine "training in holiness", adapted to people's needs. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance, as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church.

C. On St. Therese and her little way.

1. She was "entirely captivated by the love of God," he said in Paris in 1997 during WYD. "She lived the radical offering of herself in response to that love." He added a few days later when he returned to Rome, that she "had a marvelous understanding of the overwhelming message of God's love, received as a gift and lived with the humble trust and simplicity of children who in Jesus Christ totally entrust themselves to the Father. And she has become its authoritative teacher for the present and future of the Church.
2. She discovered that her vocation was to be "love in the heart of the Church." That is the vocation of each of us. That is the simple path to holiness, to the perfection of charity.
3. She said once, "It is not happiness that attracts me... but Love alone! To love, to be loved and to return to earth to make Love loved."
4. John Paul II commented, "The way she took to reach this ideal of life is not that of the great undertakings reserved for the few, but on the contrary, a way within everyone's reach, the "little way," a path of trust and total self-abandonment to the Lord's grace. It is not a prosaic way, as if it were less demanding. It is in fact a demanding reality, as the Gospel always is. But it is a way in which one is imbued with a sense of trusting abandonment to divine mercy, which makes even the most rigorous spiritual commitment light."

IV Conclusion

- A. In all of these areas, John Paul II put out into the deep with courage to proclaim both what Christ reveals about the human person in all these dimensions of existence but also how man and woman, boy and girl will only discover who they are by giving of themselves to God and others with the same "duc in altum" with which Christ gave himself to us.
- B. This is the ultimate lesson given by the life and the teaching of Blessed John Paul II.
- C. I'd like to conclude by going back to his inaugural homily, which tells us what to do with what we've learned tonight in the school of John Paul II.
- D. He commented about his first homily 15 years later, in CTK:
- E. "When, on October 22, 1978, I said the words, 'Be not afraid!' in St. Peter's Square, I could not fully know how far they would take me and the entire Church. ... The exhortation 'Be not afraid!' should be interpreted as having a very broad meaning. In a certain sense it was an exhortation addressed to all people, an exhortation to conquer fear in the present world situation, as much in the East as in the West, as much in the North as in the South. Have no fear of that which you yourselves have created, have no fear of all that man has produced, and that every day is becoming more dangerous for him! Finally, have no fear of yourselves! Why should we have no fear? Because man has been redeemed by God. When pronouncing those words in St. Peter's Square, I already knew that my first encyclical and my entire papacy would be tied to the truth of the Redemption. In the Redemption we find the most profound basis for the words 'Be not afraid!' 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.' This Son is always present in the history of humanity as Redeemer. The Redemption pervades all of human history, even before Christ, and prepares its eschatological future. It is the light that 'shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' The power of Christ's Cross and Resurrection is greater than any evil that man could or should fear."
- F. "We need, perhaps more than ever, the words of the Risen Christ 'Be not afraid!' Man who, even after the fall of Communism, has not stopped being afraid and who truly has many reasons for feeling this way, needs to hear these words. ... Peoples and nations of the entire world need to hear these words. Their conscience needs to grow in the certainty that Someone exists who holds in His hands the destiny of this passing world; Someone who holds the keys to death and the netherworld. Someone who is the Alpha and Omega of human history — be it the individual or collective history. And this Someone is Love — Love that became man, Love crucified and risen, Love unceasingly present among men. It is

Eucharistic Love. It is the infinite source of communion. He alone can give the ultimate assurance when he says, "Be not afraid!"

G. Praised be Jesus Christ!