

The Priestly Life and Witness of John XXIII

Introduction

- The beauty of the priestly life and witness of Pope John XXIII was summarized aptly by the fellow successor of St. Peter with whom he will be canonized on Sunday, Pope John Paul II, in his homily for John's beatification, September 3, 2000, which I was privileged to be able to attend and at which distribute Holy Communion to the crowd overflowing St. Peter's Square.
 - "Today we contemplate in the glory of the Lord ... *John XXIII*, the Pope who impressed the world with the friendliness of his manner which radiated the remarkable goodness of his soul. ... Everyone remembers the image of Pope John's smiling face and two outstretched arms embracing the whole world. How many people were won over *by his simplicity of heart, combined with a broad experience of people and things!* *The breath of newness* he brought certainly did not concern doctrine, but rather the way to explain it; his style of speaking and acting was new, as was his friendly approach to ordinary people and to the powerful of the world. It was in this spirit that he called *the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, thereby turning a new page in the Church's history: Christians heard themselves called to proclaim the Gospel with renewed courage and greater attentiveness to the 'signs' of the times. The Council was a truly prophetic insight of this elderly Pontiff who, even amid many difficulties, opened a season of hope for Christians and for humanity. In the last moments of his earthly life, he entrusted his testament to the Church: "What counts the most in life is blessed Jesus Christ, his holy Church, his Gospel, truth and goodness." We too wish to receive this testament, as we glorify God for having given him to us as a Pastor.
- In the days before and after his canonization, I saw an outpouring of devotion for Pope John that was really moving. I will still a spark in the eternal *Nous* when John led the Church, but being in Rome during those days I was able to witness first hand a love for him, especially among the Italians, that I'll never forget. Two weeks after his beatification, I went to St. Peter's Basilica one Sunday morning to celebrate Mass. During the Jubilee Year, when there were canonizations, beatifications or Jubilee Masses in the Square such that the Basilica was officially closed, I was often the only priest not only celebrating Mass in the Basilica but in the Basilica at all. Most of the priests who celebrated Mass there each morning who worked in the Vatican had weekend pastoral assignments and visiting priests didn't know how to get in, so I would often be alone. So on September 17, I entered the basilica with a priest friend of mine to celebrate Mass, we thought, privately at our pick of all the altars in the Basilica, for which I normally celebrated over the tomb of Pope Gregory the Great or Pope Leo the Great. But that day, the sacristan came over to me and asked if we wouldn't mind celebrating the Mass in Italian at the tomb of Pope John XXIII, because many of the sisters who had worked behind the scenes in the Vatican and would be occupied later during the Jubilee Mass for the Elderly were all in the Basilica at the altar of Pope John XXIII. We said we would be happy to do so. So we got ready and processed out. Normally on these Sundays, there was no one in the Basilica, but that morning there were about 70 sisters all waiting for whichever priest showed up, hoping that they would have the chance for a Mass at Pope John's altar. To see their love for him, and their gratitude to us for celebrating Mass for them there, was very moving. Incidentally, that's a Mass I'll never forget for another reason. At the time of Sanctus, I leaned over to the concelebrant, Fr. Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute, a past speaker at this Seminar, and said that I wasn't feeling so good, that all of a sudden I was dizzy, had an upset stomach, and was beginning to wonder whether I was going to be able to finish the Mass. His response was, "The formaldehyde was nauseating him, too," which is when I realized why I had suddenly taken ill. The embalming fluid with which John had been filled after his death was so strong that it was able to exude from a crystal and bronze casing under the altar and almost knock out priests celebrating Mass 37 years later. We needed to take a few steps back after the consecration and celebrate Mass down the two steps of the altar to finish.

- I first came to know Pope John XXIII through his Journal of a Soul that I got for \$1 in a used book store a few months before I entered the Seminary. I was at the time oblivious to the larger narrative about him inside and outside the Church, that he was “il Papa buono” in implicit comparison to “il Papa cattivo,” his predecessor. I just knew he was a pope with a short reign who summoned the Second Vatican Council. I barely knew anything else about him and so I read his Journal, the diary of God’s inner workings within him from the age of 14 through his death. It was a chance to get to know him on the inside, to enter into his own spiritual life, his first hand experience of life, and it was enormously helpful to me. Seeing his maturity as a teenage seminarian with regard to his prayer life, study, asceticism and discipline all helped me to put my own game face on. Having had the chance to know and in a sense befriend him through this posthumously published Journal, I would later get offended by the caricatured narratives of him as someone who opened the windows of the Church basically so that the spirit of dissent and disobedience, sanctuary jackhammers, liturgical license, bill control pills and priests and women religious abandoning their vocations together could all enter. As soon as we had decided on the topic of Priestly Models of Holiness for Parish Priests Today as the theme because of the impending double canonization, I volunteered to take John XXIII so that I’d have a chance to refamiliarize myself with his holy life and be better prepared in various media around his canonization to bring the real Don Angelo Roncalli to life.
- In this talk on his priestly life and lessons, I would like to break it down into two basic parts. In the first section, I’d like to go over his very rich biography, which certainly influenced the style of his papacy. I’ll focus on ten different stages in his life. In the second half, I’d like to focus on ten different things we can learn from his words and witness to strengthen us in our own vocations.

Biography — We can break down his life into ten main formative periods.

- Birth and young childhood
 - Fourth of 13 children, oldest boy, born Nov 25, 1881. Parents Giovanni and Marianna. The baptismal register reads, “In the year of 1881, 25 November, I, Francesco Rebuzzini, the priest of this Church of San Giovanni Battista of Sotto il Monte, baptized the infant born today of the lawfully married couple Giovanni Battista Roncalli and Marianna Mazzola, from Brusico in this parish. The infant was given the names Giovanni Giuseppe. (Error: it was Angelo Giuseppe).
 - Sotto il Monte, outside of Bergamo
 - The Roncallis were poor sharecroppers who had lived “under the mountain” for five centuries. He would say as pope, “there are three ways of ruining oneself — women, gambling and farming. My father chose the most boring.”
 - They lived with their six cows in the first floor of a house that had 32 of his aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins.
 - Went to local elementary school for 3 years where the education was quite poor. His godfather arranged for him to have Latin lessons from a priest in Carvico, Don Pietro Bolis, who was quite demanding and abusive. After a year of blows, he went as a 9 year old to the bishop’s school in Celana, founded by St. Charles Borromeo as a pre-junior seminary. He lived with relatives four miles away from the school, to which he would walk back and forth each day. But the schooling wasn’t effective. He was pulled by his hero, Fr. Francesco Rebuzzini, pastor of Santa Maria de Brusico, who had baptized him and had helped to arrange for his education. He educated young Angelo himself and got him ready for the junior seminary in Bergamo. As Pope, John would recall him as “the saintly guardian of my childhood and vocation” and from whom, after his death, he purloined his well-used copy of the Imitation of Christ that he tried to enfold.
 - About his family, he would later say in a letter to his parents, “Ever since I left home, towards the age of ten, I have read many books and learned many things that you could not have taught me. But what I learned from you remains the most precious and important, and it sustains and gives life to the many other things I learned later in so many years of study and teaching.”
 - His father said about him when he was leaving, “He is a poor farmer’s son. He’ll make a poor priest.”
- Seminarian

- At 11 he entered the seminary for the Diocese of Bergamo, in a seminary founded by St. Charles Borromeo. He struggled with math and science but excelled in classics, history and theology. He began the practice of spiritual direction.
- This is a real focus of his Journal, with 80 printed pages dedicated to these formative years. He began it at the advice of the spiritual director of the Seminary, Canon Luigi Isacchi.
- He would say much later that he could never remember the time when he didn't want to be a priest.
- At 19, he earned a scholarship established in 1640 by Canon Flaminio Cerasola for those from Bergamo to go to theological study in Rome, where he would obtain a doctor in theology and also begin studying canon law.
- Military Service
 - During his first year in Rome, he was drafted and did a year of military service, became a sergeant and helping out in the medical corps. He called it his “year of Babylonian captivity.” It was a tough assignment. He noted in his journal how vulgar and sexually active his fellow soldiers were and called the army a “running fountain of pollution.” But it helped him to see just how much God was needed. He excelled on the rifle range and on the long marches.
 - Later, he would have to return to the military, 11 years after his priestly ordination, when Italy declared war in 1915. He was called up for duty as a sergeant in the medical corps as a stretcher-bearer for a year behind the lines and then a lieutenant-chaplain for three years where he coordinated the spiritual and moral care of soldiers.
- Priestly duties
 - Ordination, August 10, 1904, at 22 years and 9 months, at Santa Maria in Monte Santo in Rome's Piazza del Popolo by Bishop Giuseppe Cappelletti. Celebrated his first Mass in the grottoes where 59 years later he would be buried. Went to meet Pope Pius X, who encouraged him, after he nervously stammered out a few words He wrote in his Journal that Pius placed his hand on his head, and said, “Well done, well done, my boy... this is what I like to hear. I will ask the Lord to grant a special blessing on these good intentions of yours so that you may remain a priest after his own heart.” His family was too poor to pay for the train to come for his ordination, but he was able to return home to celebrate Mass in the Church he was baptized on the Assumption.
 - He returned to Rome to do another degree in canon law at the beginning of November, but in January of the next year, his new young bishop, Giacomo Maria Radini-Tedeschi tried him and another Bergamo priest in Rome for the position of secretary. Angelo was chosen at the age of 24. He served as Bishop's secretary for 10 years until Radini-Tedeschi. Radini-Tedeschi had been a rising star in the Pontificate of Leo XIII, very close to Cardinal Rampolla, who was almost elected Pope. As things happen after the Papal election, Rampolla was marginalized as were his closest collaborators and Radini-Tedeschi experienced the classic *promoveatur ut amoveatur*. But he was incredibly gifted and one of the leaders of Catholic Action in Italy that had just begun, forming Italian lay people to serve as the salt, light and leaven of Italian society after three decades of absenting themselves from the political scene and being forbidden even to vote. Radini-Tedeschi became his great teacher and mentor, allowing Fr. Angelo to accompany him on all his pastoral visits, pilgrimages and other pastoral initiatives.
 - On his mentor, he said: “He was the polar star of my priesthood. His soul was more disposed to note merits than to exaggerate faults. He treated everybody with the greatest deference. He spoke with incomparable pleasantness, seasoning his conversation with unexpected witticisms. He was not authoritarian. He wanted all those around him to contribute their energies to the apostolate and to assume their proper responsibilities. He was discreet. One remarked a depth of inexhaustible gaiety in his soul.”
 - From him, he learned how to apply changes within the Church while preserving older traditions.
 - He was appointed editor of the monthly journal *La Vita Diocesana* and wrote for Bergamo's daily Catholic newspaper.
 - He taught history, patrology and apologetics in the Bergamo seminary
 - In 1910 he was appointed chaplain to all the women in Catholic action in the Diocese.
 - He was a much sought after teacher and preacher.

- He became secretary of the Diocesan Synod, something he saw great fruits from that he would bring with him to the papacy.
- One of the most significant things that happened during this time was that he found in the Ambrosian library in Milan the papers concerning St. Charles Borromeo's visitation to Bergamo in 1575. He thought that the story absolutely needed to be told and dedicated four decades of his life to publishing five volumes of the work. The volumes appeared in 1936, 1937, 1938, 1946 and 1957, spanning his time in the diplomatic corps and as Patriarch of Venice. He would give out copies as Pope. He saw Borromeo's efforts in Bergamo as a paradigm for the reform of a Diocese and of the Church. He got to see how important an ecumenical council could be to bring about renewal.
- Another important element is that he was assisted very much in his research at the Ambrosian library by the Librarian, Msgr. Achille Ratti, who would later become Pope Pius XI and be instrumental in his future.
- After Radini-Tedeschi's death, he was appointed seminary professor and spiritual assistant to various associations. He taught church history and apologetics.
- After returning from four years of military service in 1919, his new bishop Marelli asked him to found a "Home for Students" for university students and serve as their chaplain.
- He founded several Catholic professional guilds
- He began youth groups especially for girls
- He filled it for priests absent from their parishes, saying Mass, visiting the sick, hearing confessions, teaching the catechism.
- Bishop Marelli appointed him spiritual director of the seminary, helping those who were traumatized by the war.
- Propagation of the Faith
 - In 1921, when he was 39, he began a new phase of his life in service to the Holy See.
 - Pope Benedict XVI named him national president of the central Council for Missions at the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Traveled throughout Italy and other parts of Europe, organizing missionary circles.
 - He kept teaching while he was in Rome on patristics at the Lateran. But he got in trouble with the accusation as a modernist for saying "in certain cases, it may be okay to sanction a mixed marriage."
- Apostolic Visitor to Bulgaria
 - When he was 43 on Feb 17, 1925, Cardinal Gasparri told him that Pius XI made him Archbishop and sent him to Bulgaria, where he was for the next decade. Like his mentor, Radini-Tedeschi, it seems that he had been tagged as a modernist and was being promoted to be gotten ride of. Later, when he was Pope, he asked for his personnel file and found the notation, "Suspected of Modernism." He was angry and took out a pen and wrote, "I, John XXIII, Pope, declare that I was never a Modernist!" Later, after he had calmed down, he said, "I am the living example that a priest who has been placed under observation by the Holy Office can still become pope."
 - He chose as his motto *Obedientia et Pax*, which in some ways was the program of his life. Cardinal Baronius used to say these words as he kissed the feet of St. Peter in the basilica. He said in his journal: "I have not sought or desired this new ministry: the Lord has chosen it for me, making it clear that it is his will and that it would be a grave sin for me to refuse."
 - Pope Francis reflected on this motto on the 50th anniversary of his death, when a pilgrimage from the Diocese of Bergamo came to St. Peter's Basilica.
 - What had made him [such a pastor and a father to so many]? How had he been able to reach the heart of people so different from each other and even many non-Christians? To answer this question we may refer to his episcopal motto, *Oboedientia et Pax*: obedience and peace. "These words", Mons. Roncalli noted on the eve of his episcopal ordination, "in a certain way sum up my story and my life".
 - I would like to start with peace, because this is the most obvious aspect, the one that people perceived in Pope John: Angelo Roncalli was a man who could communicate peace; natural, serene and cordial peace; a peace which, with his election to the Pontificate, was manifested to the whole world and was described as "goodness". This was undoubtedly a distinctive

trait of his personality which enabled him to make firm friendships everywhere, as was particularly evident in his ministry as Papal Representative. He served in this capacity for almost three decades, frequently in touch with environments and worlds far removed from the Catholic universe in which he had been born and raised. In those very milieus he proved an effective weaver of relationships and a solid champion of unity, both in the ecclesiastical community and outside it. Moreover he was open to dialogue with the Christians of other Churches, with representatives of the Jewish and Muslim worlds and with many other people of good will. Indeed Pope John conveyed peace because his mind was profoundly at peace: he had let the Holy Spirit create peace within him. And this mind filled with peace was the result of long and challenging work on himself, abundant traces of which have been left in the *Journal of a Soul*. In it we can see Roncalli — the seminarian, the priest, the bishop — coming to grips with the gradual process of purification of the heart. We see him, day by day, taking pains to recognize and mortify the desires that stemmed from his own selfishness and to discern the inspirations of the Lord, letting himself be guided by wise spiritual directors and be inspired by teachers such as St Francis de Sales and St Charles Borromeo. In reading these writings we truly see a soul being formed under the action of the Holy Spirit who works in his Church, in souls: it was the Spirit himself who, with these good inclinations, brought peace to Roncalli's soul.

- Here we come to the second and crucial word: “obedience”. Although peacefulness was his external feature, Roncalli's inner disposition consisted of obedience. Obedience, in fact, was his means for attaining peace. First of all it had a very simple and practical meaning: carrying out in the Church the service that his superiors asked of him, seeking nothing for himself, not shrinking from anything requested of him, even when it meant leaving his homeland to face worlds unknown to him and staying long years in places where Catholics were few and far between. It was his willingness to be led like a child that forged his career as a priest, with which you are well acquainted; secretary to Bishop Radini Tedeschi and at the same time teacher and spiritual director at the diocesan seminary; Papal Representative in Bulgaria, in Turkey and Greece, and in France; Pastor of the Venetian Church, and, finally, Bishop of Rome. Yet through this obedience, Roncalli — as a priest and as a bishop — also lived a deeper faithfulness, which we could describe, as he might have said, as abandonment to Divine Providence. He constantly recognized in faith that through living in this way, seemingly led by others and not by his own preferences or on the basis of his own spiritual sensibility, God was designing a project of his own. He was a man of governance, he was a leader. But he was a leader led by the Holy Spirit, out of obedience. The future Pope John experienced even more profoundly, through this daily abandonment to God's will, a purification that enabled him to be completely detached from himself and to adhere to Christ. It was in this manner that he let the holiness shine out which the Church was later to recognize officially. “Whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it”, Jesus says (Lk 9:24). This is the true source of Pope John's goodness, of the peace he disseminated throughout the world. It is here that the root of his holiness is found: in his evangelical obedience.
- This is a lesson for each one of us, but also for the Church of our time: if we let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit, if we are able to mortify our selfishness to make room for the Lord's love and for his will, we will find peace, we will be builders of peace and will spread peace around us.
- He was ordained a bishop on March 19, 1925 and arrived in Sophia a month later. Subsequently he was named the first Apostolic delegate to Bulgaria and named an Archbishop. He was the first envoy sent to Bulgaria in 600 years. There were 45000 Catholics in Bulgaria plus 5000 Unitates, compared to 780,000 Muslims and 48,000 Jews.
- About being a diplomat, he once said: “In order to be a good diplomat, there are only two possible solutions: either one must be as mute as a mole, or garrulous to the point where one's proposals lose importance. Given the fact that I am an Italian, I prefer the second method.”

- He went out to visit the Catholics. Rural Catholics were surprised to see him; no one from the Church except their parish priests had paid much attention to him. They called him “Diado,” or “Good Father” although many referred to him as “the round one.”
- He distinguished himself with charitable service during the terrible earthquake of 1928. He served the thousands who were homeless and begged the Vatican for emergency aid, begging the Vatican and friends for money. The soup kitchens he established were called “the Pope’s soup Kitchens,” which fed people throughout the region. He slept in tents among the refugees.
- Ten Years among the Bulgarians taught him about the Orthodox.
- Close to royal family but also betrayed by them at the same time, when they revoked explicit commitments with regard to the Church vis-à-vis the Orthodox in situations with the royal family, something that embarrassed him and hurt him with those in Rome who didn’t think he had what it took to cut it as a diplomat. King Boris decided to marry Princess Giovanna, daughter of King Victor Emmanuel of Italy. Pius balked because of the mixed marriage. Roncalli was entrusted with the mission to convince Boris that that marriage must be solemnized only in the Catholic Church and that the children must be raised Catholic. But six days after the Catholic ceremony, there was an Orthodox. Pius summoned him to Rome, forcing Roncalli to kneel before him while he berated him for embarrassing the Church. King Boris then took their first child and had him baptized Orthodox.
- The whole experience helped him to grow in abandonment to Christ crucified.
- Papal Legate to Turkey and Greece
 - On Nov 27, 1934, just after turning 53, he was transferred to Istanbul as legate to Turkey and Greece.
 - He was present in many ways throughout the young Turkish republic of Attaturk, which was secular and anti-religious.
 - He had a demanding ministry to Catholics while negotiating things with the Orthodox, the Muslims, and the secularists in Turkey. He engaged in a great deal of dialogue at the level of humanity and service.
 - Things in Greece were very hard because of antipathy toward the Church on the part of the Orthodox religious leadership, but he was eventually able to gain access after World War II started to decimate Greece and there was a need for charity.
 - Throughout WW II, he worked deftly and diligently to save the lives of thousands of Jewish refugees by giving them transit visas issued by the Apostolic delegation.
- Papal Nuncio to France
 - On December 6, 1944, at 63, Pius XII appointed him nuncio to France, where he would be until 1952.
 - It was a very difficult assignment. He arrived at the very end of WW II and the first months of peace.
 - He assisted German prisoners of war and sought to restore stability to the life of the Church in France. Supported a seminary for POWs interested in becoming priests.
 - He was very visible, visiting French shrines, participating in popular feasts and religious events.
 - The French Government was asking him to remove bishops and priests who had collaborated with the Vichy government.
 - He was attentive, prudent and trusting in his approach to the new pastoral initiatives undertaken by the clergy of France, like the worker priests movement.
 - There was the situation of worker priests.
- Patriarch of Venice
 - At 71, on January 12, 1953, he was named a cardinal by Pius XII and on January 25 was named Patriarch of Venice to take the place of the ailing Cardinal Carlo Agostini.
 - Received the red hat from the atheist President of France, Vincent Auriol.
 - “Since I was a young priest, I have wanted nothing but a country parish in my own diocese.”
 - He sought to model himself after two of his predecessors, Saints Lorenzo Giustiniani and Pius X.
- Pope
 - Pius XII died on October 9.

- He was elected Pope at 76, October 28, 1958 at 4:50 pm.
- First ballot he had 20 votes to Patriarch Gregory Peter XV Agagianian's 18. There were 13 other ballots of the 51 total. Over the course of 11 ballots he fell behind Agagianian. The eleventh scrutiny had him with 38, to Agagianian's 10 and 3 others.
- He took the name of John, first John in 500 years, settling problem of an anti-pope (John XXIII, Baldassare Cossa, from 1410-1415) who was called John XXIII.
 - I choose John... a name sweet to us because it is the name of our father, dear to me because it is the name of the humble parish church where I was baptized, the solemn name of numberless cathedrals scattered throughout the world, including our own basilica [St. John Lateran]. Twenty-two Johns of indisputable legitimacy have [been Pope], and almost all had a brief pontificate. We have preferred to hide the smallness of our name behind this magnificent succession of Roman Popes.
- Told Cardinal Maurice Feltin he chose the name John in memory of France and John XXII who continued the history of the papacy in France.
- Need to stay humble
 - On his election as Pope: "I remembered Jesus' warning: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.' Dazzled by the television lights, I could see nothing but an amorphous, swaying mass. I blessed Rome and the world as though I were a blind man. As I came away I thought of all the cameras and lights that from now on, at every moment, would be directed on me. And I said to myself: if you don't remain a disciple of the gentle and humble Master, you'll understand nothing even of temporal realities. Then you'll really be blind."
 - When asked how he felt about being elected Pope, his answer was typically John: "Much emotion and a host of anxieties. But also the same sensation as a baby in swaddling clothes, because the cassock which they had slipped over me was very tight and I felt as though I were wrapped up like a mummy."
 - In the first days of his pontificate, John XXIII received a letter from a twelve-year-old boy named Bruno. It read: "My dear Pope: I am undecided. I want to be a policeman or a Pope. What do you think?" The Pope replied: "My little Bruno. If you want my opinion, learn how to be a policeman, because that cannot be improvised. Anybody can be pope; the proof of this is that I have become one. If you ever should be in Rome, come to see me. I would be glad to talk all this over with you."
- Started to travel, ending papal seclusion and visibly taking part in corporal and spiritual works of mercy:
 - Visited sick children at Bambino Gesù and the infirm at Holy Spirit hospital and other places.
 - He visited inmates at Regina Coeli prison, "You could not come to me so I came to you."
 - He began making pastoral visits to the Roman parishes.
 - At a parish one day, Pope John heard a woman, taken aback by the Pope's obesity, make the remark to her companion, "God, but he's fat!" Pope John turned around and benignly observed: "But, Madame, you must know that the conclave is not exactly a beauty contest!"
 - He welcomed people of all nations and religions, seeking to model God's fatherhood to all
 - He once said, "If the Eternal Father says to me, 'Roncalli, you need to be harsher and more strict at times,' I will say, 'Eternal Father, it is you who sent your Son to give me a bad example!'"
 - Visited Assisi and Loreto on October 4, 1962. First pope to travel outside of Rome since Pope Pius IX. Stopped in various places along the way.
 - The pontiff's wanderings didn't go without criticism, which caused him to comment: "So they say I go out too much during the day. Very well, from now on I'll go out at night."
- Obviously what he is most known for is calling the Second Vatican Council
 - Need for it

- A question was raised in a meeting I had with the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tardini, which led on to a discussion about the way the world was plunged into so many grave anxieties and troubles... What should the Church do? Should Christ's mystical barque simply drift along, tossed this way and that by the ebb and flow of the tides? Instead of issuing new warnings, shouldn't she stand out as a beacon of light? What could that exemplary light be? Suddenly my soul was illumined by a great idea which came precisely at that moment and which I welcomed with ineffable confidence in the divine Teacher. And there sprang to my lips a word that was solemn and committing. My voice uttered it for the first time: a Council.
- Calling it, Jan 25, 1959 after Mass at St. Paul's Outside the Walls
 - Venerable brothers and our beloved sons! We announce to you, indeed trembling a little with emotion, but at the same time with humble resolution of intention, the name and the proposal of a twofold celebration: a diocesan synod for the city, and an ecumenical council for the Universal Church.
- Pushing for it
 - Cardinal Ottaviani and others were trying to delay it. He kept expediting it and building momentum for it, even though it was a monumental undertaking.
 - A prelate of the Curia told the Pope: "It is absolutely impossible to open the Council in 1963." Pope John replied: "Fine, we'll open it in 1962!"
- Opening Address, October 11, 1962
 - As regards the initiative for the great event which gathers us here, it will suffice to repeat as historical documentation our personal account of the first sudden bringing up in our heart and lips of the simple words, "Ecumenical Council." We uttered those words in the presence of the Sacred College of Cardinals on that memorable January 25, 1959, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, in the basilica dedicated to him. It was completely unexpected, like a flash of heavenly light, shedding sweetness in eyes and hearts. And at the same time it gave rise to a great fervor throughout the world in expectation of the holding of the Council.
 - The great problem confronting the world after almost two thousand years remains unchanged. Christ is ever resplendent as the center of history and of life. Men are either with Him and His Church, and then they enjoy light, goodness, order, and peace. Or else they are without Him, or against Him, and deliberately opposed to His Church, and then they give rise to confusion, to bitterness in human relations, and to the constant danger of fratricidal wars.
 - In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In these modern times they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse, and they behave as though they had learned nothing from history, which is, none the less, the teacher of life. They behave as though at the time of former Councils everything was a full triumph for the Christian idea and life and for proper religious liberty.
 - In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by men's own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs. And everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church.
 - The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously. That doctrine embraces the whole of man, composed as he is of body and soul. And, since he is a pilgrim on this earth, it commands him to tend always toward heaven.

- In order, however, that this doctrine may influence the numerous fields of human activity, with reference to individuals, to families, and to social life, it is necessary first of all that the Church should never depart from the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers. But at the same time she must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world, which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.
- The salient point of this Council is not, therefore, a discussion of one article or another of the fundamental doctrine of the Church which has repeatedly been taught by the Fathers and by ancient and modern theologians, and which is presumed to be well known and familiar to all. For this a Council was not necessary. But from the renewed, serene, and tranquil adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness, as it still shines forth in the Acts of the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council, the Christian, Catholic, and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a Magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.
- At the outset of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident, as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of men follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations. ... The Catholic Church, raising the torch of religious truth by means of this Ecumenical Council, desires to show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward the brethren who are separated from her.
- Venerable brothers, such is the aim of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which, while bringing together the Church's best energies and striving to have men welcome more favorably the good tidings of salvation, prepares, as it were and consolidates the path toward that unity of mankind which is required as a necessary foundation, in order that the earthly city may be brought to the resemblance of that heavenly city where truth reigns, charity is the law, and whose extent is eternity
 - Patiently guided it behind the scenes by sending messages through certain trusted emissaries to resolve some disputes
 - Opening windows
 - What did John XXIII expect from the Council? “The Council?” he said as he moved toward the window and made a gesture as if to open it. “I expect a little fresh air from it... We must shake off the imperial dust that has accumulated on the throne of St. Peter since Constantine
- Eight Encyclicals — These show his burning pastoral priorities
 - *Ad Petri Cathedram* — to the chair of Peter — June 29, 1959, on truth, unity, peace and charity
 - Today as We address Our first Encyclical Letter to the entire Catholic world, Our apostolic office clearly demands that We discuss three objectives—truth, unity, and peace—and indicate how they may be achieved and advanced in a spirit of charity.

- All the evils which poison men and nations and trouble so many hearts have a single cause and a single source: ignorance of the truth—and at times even more than ignorance, a contempt for truth and a reckless rejection of it.
- And yet, God gave each of us an intellect capable of attaining natural truth. If we adhere to this truth, we adhere to God Himself, the author of truth, the lawgiver and ruler of our lives. But if we reject this truth, whether out of foolishness, neglect, or malice, we turn our backs on the highest good itself and on the very norm for right living.
- And in this day of ours, as you well know, Venerable Brethren and beloved sons, we also have radio broadcasts, motion pictures, and television (which can enter easily into the home). All of these can provide inspiration and incentive for morality and goodness, even Christian virtue. Unfortunately, however, they can also entice men, especially the young, to loose morality and ignoble behavior, to treacherous error and perilous vice.
- Besides this, our journey through this mortal life should not be regarded as an end in itself, entered upon merely for pleasure. This journey leads beyond the burial of our human flesh to immortal life, to a fatherland which will endure forever.
- But all will come out well if the social teaching of the Catholic Church is applied as it should be to the problem.
- *Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia* — “From the beginning of our priesthood” — August 1, 1959, on St. John Vianney, for the 100th anniversary of his passing to the Father’s house
 - Personal connections to SJMV at the beginning.
 - When We think of the first days of Our priesthood, which were so full of joyous consolations, We are reminded of one event that moved Us to the very depths of Our soul: the sacred ceremonies that were carried out so majestically in the Basilica of St. Peter's on January 8, 1905, when John Mary Baptist Vianney, a very humble French priest, was enrolled in the lists of the Blessed in Heaven. Our own ordination to the priesthood had taken place a few short months before, and it filled Us with wonder to see the delight of Our predecessor of happy memory, St. Pius X (who had once been the parish priest of the town of Salzano), as he offered this wonderful model of priestly virtues to all those entrusted with the care of souls, for their imitation. Now as We look back over the span of so many years, We never stop giving thanks to Our Redeemer for this wonderful blessing, which marked the beginning of Our priestly ministry and served as an effective heavenly incentive to virtue
 - It is all the easier to remember, because on the very same day on which the honors of the Blessed were attributed to this holy man, word reached Us of the elevation of that wonderful prelate, Giacomo M. Radini-Tedeschi, to the dignity of Bishop; a few days later, he was to call Us to assist him in his work, and We found him a most loving teacher and guide. It was in his company that, early in 1905, We made Our first pious pilgrimage to the tiny village called Ars, that had become so famous because of the holiness of its Cure
 - Again, We cannot help thinking that it was through a special design of God's providence that the year in which We became a Bishop— 1925—was the very one in which, toward the end of May, the Supreme Pontiff of happy memory, Pius XI, accorded the honors of sainthood to the humble Cure of Ars. In his talk on that occasion, the Supreme Pontiff chose to remind everyone of "the gaunt figure of John Baptist Vianney, with that head shining with long hair that resembled a snowy crown, and that thin face, wasted from long fasting, where the innocence and holiness of the meekest and humblest of souls shone forth so clearly that the first sight of it called crowds of

people back to thoughts of salvation." A short while after, this same predecessor of Ours took the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his own ordination to the priesthood to designate St. John Mary Vianney (to whose patronage St. Pius X had previously committed all of the shepherds of souls in France) as the heavenly patron of all "pastors, to promote their spiritual welfare throughout the world."

- St. John Mary Vianney is a person who attracts and practically pushes all of us to these heights of the priestly life. And so We are pleased to add Our own exhortations to the others, in the hope that the priests of Our day may exert every possible effort in this direction.
- *Grata Recordatio*, "With joyful recollection," On the Rosary, prayer for the Church, missions and other social problems, Sept 26, 1959
- *Princeps Pastorum*, "The prince of the shepherds," On the missions, native clergy and lay participation, Nov 28, 1959
 - Local hierarchy, local priests, native teachers in seminaries
 - Education for the apostolate, especially of the laity
 - Material help, prayer
- *Mater et Magistra*, "Mother and Teacher," On Christianity and Social Progress, May 15, 1961
 - *Mater et Magistra* was written in observance of the 70th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. It also refers to the social teaching of Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*, and of Pope Pius XII in a radio broadcast given 1 June 1941. The document mentions the following changes in the world since then:
 - Scientific advances including atomic energy, synthetic materials, increased automation, modern agriculture, new means of communication (radio and television), faster transportation, the beginnings of space travel.
 - New social systems such as social security, improved basic education, breaking down of class barriers, and greater awareness of public affairs by the average person.
 - Lack of economic balance between agriculture and industry, and among different countries.
 - In the political sphere, the breakdown of colonialism, independence for many states in Asia and Africa, and an increasing network of international organizations.
- *Aeterna Dei Sapientia*, "God's eternal wisdom," commemorating the 1500th anniversary of the death of Pope St. Leo the Great, Nov 11, 1961
 - From unity of the Church in Leo to the Second Vatican Council
 - Venerable Brethren, the fifteenth centenary of the death of St. Leo the Great finds the Catholic Church in much the same plight as she was at the turn of the fifth century. The same waves of bitter hostility break upon her. How many violent storms does she not enter in these days of ours—storms that trouble Our fatherly heart, even though our Divine Redeemer clearly forewarned us of them! ... To rid the Church of these dangers We confidently invoke the patronage of that most vigilant of Popes who labored and wrote and suffered so much for the cause of Catholic unity
- *Paenitentiam Agere*, "Penance for sins," on the need for the practice of interior and exterior penance, July 1, 1962
 - In 1962, he published the encyclical *Paenitentiam Agere* on the gift of God's mercy and the need for us to recognize our need for it, come to receive it in the Sacrament of Penance, and do interior and exterior penance. This was, he declared, the best way to prepare for the Council, so that the "good seed that the Council will scatter far and wide over the Church in those days [will] not be allowed to go to waste," but rather find "hearts that are ready and prepared, loyal and true." The fruits of the Council

would happen in abundance, he believed, only if the soil of receptivity had been fertilized with God's mercy. One might argue that among the reasons for the chaos, confusion, and dissent that occurred in the Church after Vatican II was that John's summons to conversion, penance and mercy wasn't adequately followed.

- “Doing penance for one's sins is a first step towards obtaining forgiveness and winning eternal salvation. That is the clear and explicit teaching of Christ, and no one can fail to see how justified and how right the Catholic Church has always been in constantly insisting on this. She is the spokesman for her divine Redeemer. No individual Christian can grow in perfection, nor can Christianity gain in vigor, except it be on the basis of penance.”
- That is why in Our Apostolic Constitution officially proclaiming the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council and urging the faithful to make a worthy spiritual preparation for this great event by prayer and other acts of Christian virtue, We included a warning to them not to overlook the practice of voluntary mortification. And now, as the day for the opening of the Second Vatican Council draws nearer, We wish to repeat that request of Ours and dwell on it at greater length.
- *Pacem in Terris*, “Peace on Earth,” On establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and liberty, April 11, 1963
 - Peace on Earth—which man throughout the ages has so longed for and sought after—can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order
 - In this work, John XXIII reacted to the political situation in the middle of the Cold War. The "peace encyclical" was issued only two years after the erection of the Berlin Wall and only a few months after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Pope explains in this encyclical that conflicts "should not be resolved by recourse to arms, but rather by negotiation." He further emphasizes the importance of respect of human rights as an essential consequence of the Christian understanding of men. He clearly establishes "...That every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life..."
 - The document is divided into four sections.
 - The first section of the encyclical establishes the relationship between individuals and mankind, encompassing the issues of human rights and moral duties.
 - The second section addresses the relationship between man and state, dwelling on the collective authority of the latter.
 - The third section establishes the need for equality amongst nations and the need for the state to be subject to rights and duties that the individual must abide by.
 - The final section presents the need for greater relations between nations, thus resulting in collective states assisting other states. The encyclical ends with the urging of Catholics to assist non-Christians and non-Catholics in political and social aspects
- Death
 - Diagnosed with stomach cancer September 23, 1962. It was kept from the public for some time. It led to stomach hemorrhages.
 - On May 25, he discovered that the cancer would kill him, that there was nothing that could be done. His siblings came. He was confined to his bed.
 - He died on June 3, 1963 of peritonitis caused by a perforated stomach at 19:50 (local time: 7:49pm) at the age of 81, ending a historic pontificate of four years and seven months.
 - Last words: “At 11 am Petrus Canisius Van Lierde as Papal Sacristan was at the bedside of the dying pope, ready to anoint him. The pope began to speak for the very last time: "I had the great grace to be born into a Christian family, modest and poor, but with the fear of the Lord. My time on

earth is drawing to a close. But Christ lives on and continues his work in the Church. Souls, souls, ut omnes unum sint."

- Pope Francis, on 50th anniversary of his death, said: "Exactly 50 years ago, at this very time, Blessed John XXIII departed this world. Those who, like myself, have reached a certain age have vivid memories of the emotion that spread everywhere in those days. St Peter's Square had become an open-air shrine, welcoming by day and by night faithful of all ages and social backgrounds, fearful and praying for the Pope's health. The whole world had recognized Pope John as a pastor and father; a pastor because he was a father.
- Beatification/canonization
 - There's been a lot of criticism about some of Pope Francis' recent decisions to do equivalent canonizations of two Jesuits Peter Faber and Jose de Anchieta and two French missionaries in Canada, Marie de L'Incarnation and François de Laval as well as to suspend the need for a second miracle for John XXIII. The concern is about apologetics and the fact that at least with miracles we're able to say to those challenging Catholic devotions to the saints that since God alone can do miracles, God must want a particular holy man or woman exalted in other's eyes by granting miracles through that person's specific intercession.
 - The point may still be valid but when one hears of the miracle that happened for his beatification, that person will probably not have any issues with Pope John's intercession .
 - There was an Italian religious, Sister Caterina Capitani, of Congregation of the Daughters of Charity who in 1966 was 22. Her sisters prayed for her after she had a hemorrhage following an operation.
 - Sister Caterina attested in the days leading up to John's beatification in 2000:
 - "On May 22, a sister brought me a relic of Pope John's from Rome: a piece of the sheet upon which the Pope had died. I placed it on the perforation which had opened on my stomach, and since I was suffering quite a bit, I prayed to the Pope to take me to Heaven. I was slowly dying. I felt that my strength was leaving me. My temperature was very high. A sister guarded the room day and night. On 25 May, at around 2:30 in the afternoon, I asked a sister who was guarding the room to close the window a little because the light bothered me. She did so, and then left the room for a few minutes. I drifted off to sleep. At a certain point I felt a hand pressing the wound on my stomach and the voice of a man saying: 'Sister Caterina, Sister Caterina.'" I thought it was Doctor Zannini, who came to check on me occasionally. I turned towards the voice, and saw Pope John standing beside my bed: he had the same smile as the image that had been given me. He was the one who was holding his hand on my wound. "You prayed to me very much," he said with a calm voice. "Many people have prayed to me, but especially one. You have really taken this miracle from my heart. But don't be afraid now, you are healed. Ring the bell, call the sisters who are in the chapel, have them take your temperature and you will see that you will not have even the slightest temperature. Eat whatever you want, as you did before the sickness: I will hold my hand on your wound, and you will be healed. Go to the Doctor, have him examine you, have some x-rays done and have it all written down, because these things will be needed someday."
 - "The vision disappeared, and only then did I begin to realize what had happened. I wondered whether it had been a dream. I was trembling from the emotion and fear. I felt well. I felt no pain, but I didn't dare call the sisters: they would have thought I was crazy. After several minutes, I had to decide. I did what the Pope had told me to: I rang the bell. The sisters hurried to my bedside. They found me sitting up on the bed. They looked at me as if they were dreaming. I could no longer stifle my joy, and I almost shouted: 'I have been healed. It was Pope John. Measure my fever, you'll see that I have none.' Mother Superior thought I was delirious, as sometimes happens before death. They took my temperature: 36.8 C (98.2 F). 'Do you see?', I said, challenging them. 'Now give me something to eat because I'm hungry.' I hadn't been able to hold anything down in my stomach for many months. Mother Superior, who was almost hypnotized by my state of excitement, ordered the sisters to do as I asked. A sister brought me some semolina (bread/cake), which I ate voraciously, to the astonishment of my sisters. Then they brought me an ice cream, and I ate

that too. 'I'm still hungry', I said. The sister brought me some meatballs, and I ate those, followed by some soup, and I devoured that as well.

- "At this point, the Mother Superior, who was still not convinced of what was happening, said: 'Now we have to change you,' thinking that everything I had eaten had gone out of the fistula that had opened on my stomach, which is what always happened. They lay me down on the bed. A nurse brought gauze and a clean nightgown. They uncovered me. The nurse shouted: 'But there's nothing here.' The sisters fell on their knees, crying from emotion. Until a few minutes earlier the skin on my stomach had been one big wound: the gastric fluids that continually flowed out of the fistula had corroded the skin. The wound had completely disappeared. There was no sign of the fistula, not a trace: the skin was smooth, clean and white. So I told them what had happened.
- "From that day on," concludes Sister Caterina, "I haven't been ill at all. The doctors examined me, did scores of x-rays. There wasn't a trace of my illness. The day after the miracle I went back to a normal life. My first lunch was french fries, roasted lamb, tomatoes and ice cream. I went back to eating anything I wanted. That was 34 years ago: I'm well, I have no problems of digestion, and I work with enthusiasm."

Points about the Priesthood

- People could write doctoral dissertations on his thoughts on the Priesthood. With the time we have left, I'd like to focus on a similar ten points. There are many others that could be mentioned, but these are representative of what we can learn from his priestly life and example.
- Rule of Life
 - His secretary, Loris Capovilla, said about Angelo Roncalli's "Rules of Life" that they were truly rules for life. "He copied them out by hand, in minute writing, kept them always by him and constantly observed them, even when he was Pope."
 - As one of his seminary classmates observed, "the Journal records constant, one might almost say, obstinate growth, in step with the very slow rhythm of nature and grace.
 - First and main principle: "Choose a spiritual director from among the most exemplary, prudent and learned, in whom you may have full trust, and on whom you may depend entirely, accepting his advice and direction with complete confidence.
 - Daily:
 - 15 minutes of mental prayer getting out of bed
 - Attend or serve Daily Mass
 - 15 minutes of spiritual reading
 - General exam with act of contrition at night before bed and prepare tomorrow's meditation
 - Visit the Blessed Sacrament or visit a place of devotion to Our Lady each day
 - Recite 5 Our Fathers and 5 Hail Marias in honor of Jesus' wounds between 6-9 pm and three acts of mortification in honor of the BVM
 - Recite other vocal prayers and practice other devotions to the BVM, to St. John, to patron saints and Holy Souls.
 - Read a chapter of the Imitation of Christ.
 - Plan these into a daily schedule, along with time for study, recreation, sleep and spiritual direction
 - Use frequent invocations, raising one's mind to God.
 - 3 Hail Mary's to the Immaculate Conception for purity and chastity
 - Weekly
 - Confession and Communion
 - Fast and so some penance on Friday and Saturday
 - Devote an extra 15 minutes to prayer and spiritual reading or attend a lecture on a spiritual subject or other act of piety.
 - Discuss good and spiritual things
 - On Saturdays focus on stories about Mary

- Be accountable to the spiritual director
 - Monthly
 - Do a monthly day of recollection examining the one's following this rule.
 - Ask a zealous and exemplary young person to observe behavior and give fraternal corrections, and bring them to the spiritual director.
 - Choose a monthly spiritual patron
 - Offer communion for one's companions
 - Yearly
 - Make an annual retreat
 - Make a general confession
 - Speak to director before holidays to get advice about behavior.
 - Exchange gifts with companions to help everyone pass the time more profitably with the Lord
 - Always
 - Avoid bad company
 - Be careful around women
 - Avoid playing too many games
 - Use "lei" instead of "tu."
 - Guard purity
 - Make a special profession of humility
 - Exercise charity and patience
 - Pray for the conversion of sinners
 - Get director's advice upon leaving seminary.
 - If anyone is in need, pray for him.
 - Pray for the dead
 - He would edit and adapt over the years.
- The importance of the evangelical counsels in the life of a priest and the help needed to live them
 - Sacerdotii Nostri Primorida (SNP): Even if churchmen are not commanded to embrace these evangelical counsels by virtue of their clerical state, it still remains true that in their efforts to achieve holiness, these counsels offer them and all of the faithful the surest road to the desired goal of Christian perfection. What a great consolation it is to Us to realize that at the present time many generous hearted priests are showing that they realize this; even though they belong to the diocesan clergy, they have sought the help and aid of certain pious societies approved by Church authorities in order to find a quicker and easier way to move along the road to perfection. The "highest dignity of the priesthood consists in the imitation of Christ"(15), churchmen must pay special attention to this warning of their Divine Master: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (16) It is recorded that "the holy parish priest of Ars often thought these words of the Lord over carefully, and determined to apply them to his own actions."
 - After discussion St. John Vianney's poverty and charity, he said, "All of this will give you a clear idea of what We have in mind, Venerable Brethren, when We exhort all of Our beloved sons who share in the priesthood to give careful thought to this example of poverty and charity. "Daily experience shows"—wrote Pius XI, with St. John Mary Vianney specifically in mind—"that priests who live modestly and follow the teaching of the Gospel by paying little attention to their own interests, always confer wonderful benefits on the Christian people." ... Let them long for and seek God's glory rather than their own. It is very important for these words to sink deep into the mind of every priest. If someone owns things that are rightfully his, let him be careful not to hang on to them greedily.
 - About his chastity, self-denial and penance, he said: "This wonderful example of chastity seems to have special application to the priests of our time who—as is unfortunately the case in many regions—are often forced by the office they have assumed to live in the midst of a human society that is infected by a general looseness in morals and a spirit of unbridled lust... To this We might add the fact that they often feel themselves cut off from the society of others and that even the

faithful to whose salvation they are dedicated do not understand them and offer them little help or support in their undertakings. We want to use this letter, Venerable Brethren, to exhort, again and again, all of them, and especially those who are working alone and in the midst of very serious dangers of this kind, to let their whole life, so to say, resound with the splendor of holy chastity; St. Pius X had good reason to call this virtue the "choicest adornment of our order." ... The ascetic way of life, by which priestly chastity is preserved, does not enclose the priest's soul within the sterile confines of his own interests, but rather it makes him more eager and ready to relieve the needs of his brethren. St. John Mary Vianney has this pertinent comment to make in this regard: "A soul adorned with the virtue of chastity cannot help loving others; for it has discovered the source and font of love—God." (26) What great benefits are conferred on human society by men like this who are free of the cares of the world and totally dedicated to the divine ministry so that they can employ their lives, thoughts, powers in the interest of their brethren! How valuable to the Church are priests who are anxious to preserve perfect chastity!

- About obedience he wrote, "Our most recent predecessors have often issued serious warnings to priests about the extent of the dangers that are arising among the clergy from a growing carelessness about obedience with regard to the teaching authority of the Church, to the various ways and means of undertaking the apostolate, and to ecclesiastical discipline. We do not want to spend a lot of time on this, but We think it timely to exhort all of Our sons who share in the Catholic priesthood to foster a love in their souls that will make them feel attached to Mother Church by ever closer bonds, and then to make that love grow ... We owe ourselves and all we have to the Church; may we work each day only in her name and by her authority and may we properly carry out the duties committed to us, and may we be joined together in fraternal unity and thus strive to serve her in that perfect way in which she ought to be served.
- Eucharistic devotion and prayer of the Mass
 - The lengthy prayer of a priest before the adorable Sacrament of the Altar has a dignity and an effectiveness that cannot be found elsewhere nor be replaced. And so when the priest adores Christ Our Lord and gives thanks to Him, or offers satisfaction for his own sins and those of others, or finally when he prays constantly that God keep special watch over the causes committed to his care, he is inflamed with a more ardent love for the Divine Redeemer to whom he has sworn allegiance and for those to whom he is devoting his pastoral care. And a devotion to the Eucharist that is ardent, constant and that carries over into works also has the effect of nourishing and fostering the inner perfection of his soul and assuring him, as he carries out his apostolic duties, of an abundance of the supernatural powers that the strongest workers for Christ must have
 - But never forget that the principal form of Eucharistic prayer is contained in the holy Sacrifice of the Altar. It is Our opinion that this point ought to be considered more carefully, Venerable Brethren, for it touches on a particularly important aspect of priestly life.
 - If it is obviously true that a priest receives his priesthood so as to serve at the altar and that he enters upon this office by offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice, then it is equally true that for as long as he lives as God's minister, the Eucharistic Sacrifice will be the source and origin of the holiness that he attains and of the apostolic activity to which he devotes himself. All of these things came to pass in the fullest possible way in the case of St. John Vianney
 - For, if you give careful consideration to all of the activity of a priest, what is the main point of his apostolate if not seeing to it that wherever the Church lives, a people who are joined by the bonds of faith, regenerated by holy Baptism and cleansed of their faults will be gathered together around the sacred altar? It is then that the priest, using the sacred power he has received, offers the divine Sacrifice in which Jesus Christ renews the unique immolation which He completed on Calvary for the redemption of mankind and for the glory of His heavenly Father. It is then that the Christians who have gathered together, acting through the ministry of the priest, present the divine Victim and offer themselves to the supreme and eternal God as a "sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God." There it is that the people of God are taught the doctrines and precepts of faith and are nourished with the Body of Christ, and there it is that they find a means to gain supernatural life, to grow in it, and if need be to regain unity. And there besides, the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, grows with spiritual increase throughout the world down to the end of time.

- This should be kept in mind, in particular: whatever a priest may plan, resolve, or do to become holy, he will have to draw, for example and for heavenly strength, upon the Eucharistic Sacrifice which he offers, just as the Roman Pontifical urges: "Be aware of what you are doing; imitate what you hold in your hands."
- This lofty aspect of doctrine is what the Church has in mind when, with maternal care, she invites her sacred ministers to devote themselves to asceticism and urges them to celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice with the greatest possible interior and exterior devotion. May not the fact that some priests fail to keep in mind the close connection that ought to exist between the offering of the Sacrifice and their own self-dedication be the reason why they gradually fall off from that first fervor they had at the time of their ordination? St. John Vianney learned this from experience and expressed it this way: "The reason why priests are remiss in their personal lives is that they do not offer the Sacrifice with attention and piety."
- Speaking as a Father, We urge Our beloved priests to set aside a time to examine themselves on how they celebrate the divine mysteries, what their dispositions of soul and external attitude are as they ascend the altar and what fruit they are trying to gain from it. They should be spurred to do this by the centenary celebrations that are being held in honor of this outstanding and wonderful priest, who drew such great strength and such great desire to dedicate himself "from the consolation and happiness of offering the divine victim."
- Preach and teach the faith
 - The Council of Trent pronounced this to be a parish priest's first and greatest duty and everyone knows what immense and constant labor John Vianney expended in order to be equal to carrying out this task. For he began his course of studies when he was already along in years, and he had great difficulty with it; and his first sermons to the people kept him up for whole nights on end. How much the ministers of the word of God can find here to imitate! For there are some who give up all effort at further study and then point too readily to his small fund of learning as an adequate excuse for themselves. They would be much better off if they would imitate the great perseverance of soul with which the Cure of Ars prepared himself to carry out this great ministry to the best of his abilities: which, as a matter of fact, were not quite as limited as is sometimes believed, for he had a clear mind and sound judgment.
 - Men in Sacred Orders should gain an adequate knowledge of human affairs and a thorough knowledge of sacred doctrine that is in keeping with their abilities. Would that all pastors of souls would exert as much effort as the Cure of Ars did to overcome difficulties and obstacles in learning, to strengthen memory through practice, and especially to draw knowledge from the Cross of Our Lord, which is the greatest of all books.
 - Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius XII, was perfectly right in not hesitating to offer this country Cure as a model for the preachers of the Holy City: "The holy Cure of Ars had none of the natural gifts of a speaker that stand out in men like P. Segneri or B. Bossuet. But the clear, lofty, living thoughts of his mind were reflected in the sound of his voice and shone forth from his glance, and they came out in the form of ideas and images that were so apt and so well fitted to the thoughts and feelings of his listeners and so full of wit and charm that even St. Francis de Sales would have been struck with admiration. This is the kind of speaker who wins the souls of the faithful. A man who is filled with Christ will not find it hard to discover ways and means of bringing others to Christ."
- Confessions
 - He focused on St. John Vianney's time in the confession, his anguish over sins, his concern for sinners. Then he said, Let the example of the Cure of Ars stir up those who are in charge of souls to be eager and well-prepared in devoting themselves to this very serious work, for it is here most of all that divine mercy finally triumphs over human malice and that men have their sins wiped away and are reconciled to God
 - He called for the practice of frequent confession to bring about a swifter daily progress along the road of virtue.
- Priestly Fraternity

- John XXIII detested solitude, particularly during meals. Although protocol required that a pope dine alone, he could not resign himself to the rule. “I look like a seminarian under punishment,” complained the Pope. “I have read the Gospel over carefully without finding a single passage which prescribes that one should eat alone. As we know, Jesus loved to eat in company.”
- “Mangiano soli soltanto i cani” — “Only dogs eat alone.”
- Trust in God
 - At the end of every day, his secretary, now Cardinal Loris Capovilla once stated he would say before the Blessed Sacrament, “Lord, I’ve done the best I could today. It’s your Church. I’m going to bed.”
 - This has been very helpful for me in many pastoral situations where the problems exceed my human Pelagian capabilities and I’ve also been able to pass that on to countless parents and grandparents worried about younger loved ones.
- Knew how to have a good laugh
 - The mother superior of the Holy Spirit Hospital in Rome welcomed him one day with the words, “Most Holy Father, I am the superior of the Holy Spirit.” “Well, I must say you’re lucky, I’m only the Vicar of Jesus Christ!” was the response.
 - When asked by a newcomer to the Holy See the number of persons working at the Vatican, the pontiff mischievously replied, “Oh no more than half of them.”
 - After seeing among his audience, the chaplain general under whom he was Fr Roncalli during the First World War, stand to full attention and say, “Sergeant Roncalli, at your orders General!”
 - The same Nuncio obviously couldn’t resist a little word play with the rather under-clad lady with whom he was seated at a function. At dessert, he offered her an apple which he insisted she take, saying “Please take it Madame. It was only after Eve ate the apple that she became aware of how little she had on!”
 - When he was busted looking at a woman’s cleavage once as Nuncio, she, to let him off the hook asked, “Were you admiring my Crucifix, Monseigneur?” He smiled and told her the truth: “No, I was admiring Calvary!”
- Marian Devotion
 - He wrote both an encyclical and a letter on the Holy Rosary.
 - Angelo’s first memory of childhood was of a pilgrimage to a local shrine, the Madonna delle Caneve. By the time his pregnant mother arrived at the shrine on foot, carrying her two youngest and leading the other three, aged 4, 5, and 6, the church was full and they could not get inside. But that did not deter Marianna, who lifted the children up one after the other to look through the window. “My mother lifted me up,” Angelo recalled, “and said, ‘Look, Angelino, look how beautiful the Madonna is. I have consecrated you wholly to her.’”
- Man of peace and unity
 - “In my nightly conversations with the Lord, I always have before me Jesus Crucified, His arms outstretched to receive everyone, because the task of the Catholic and Roman Church is to work for the realisation of the prayer of the Divine Master: that all may be one.”
 - Last words: Ut unum sint!
- Conclusion
 - “I can’t remember a time when I did not want to serve God as a priest.”
 - He served him as a priest for 21,482 days and as a disciple for all 29,755 days of his life.
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