

**A Statement by Bishop Plácido Rodríguez, CMF
on the
Death of Pope John Paul II**

Together with all people of good will, the bishop, clergymen, women religious, and faithful parishioners of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock now say “farewell” to a brilliant leader, a holy priest, and a righteous man. Our hearts are heavy with loss as we reflect on the bodily death of our long-time universal pastor; but our hearts are also happy with hope as we contemplate his destiny. With Jesus Christ as the firm foundation for our hope, we believe our Heavenly Father has said “welcome” and “well done” to his “good and faithful servant,” our Holy Father, Pope John Paul the Second. (Matthew 25:21)

When he was ordained in 1946, the young Karol Wojtyla was given a mandate that is given to all who those answer the call to Holy Orders in the Catholic Church. During his *Rite of Ordination*, the presiding bishop gave instructions to the newly-ordained minister, telling him to “receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.”

In his subsequent years of ministry, Pope John Paul II has fulfilled that mandate in an inspiring and prophetic way. He carried out his duties with splendid character. He completed his work with diligence and charity, humility, and growth in grace. He has been a model of the authentic holiness to which every Christian is called.

Pope John Paul II was a holy priest and he truly believed the revelation he found in the authentic deposit of our Apostolic faith. He exhibited for us the importance of heart-felt prayer. He demonstrated to us the efficacy of sacramental living. He refocused and revitalized a profound faith in our eucharistic Lord, Jesus Christ. Pope John Paul II brought the church closer to God and

helped us all love God more dearly.

Pope John Paul II was a powerful prophet and one of the most prolific, influential, and inspiring teachers of our times. He taught the Gospel with authority, but never lost the “common touch.”

Pope John Paul II concretized divine revelation and brought God’s truth into better focus, helping us all know God more clearly.

Pope John Paul II was a gentle pastor who lived an authentically Christian witness throughout the most destructive eras in the history of humanity. He was truly a “servant leader” after the heart of Jesus Christ the King. Pope John Paul II practiced well the Gospel that he taught, showing the church the way to authentic discipleship and helping us all see how to serve God more nearly.

Nobody knows who will next serve the church as pope. Any who say they do are fooling themselves and their listeners. Only the Holy Spirit knows because it is the Holy Spirit who does the choosing. Ours is not to guess, ours is to humbly pray that whomever he is, the next pope will build on the incredible legacy left to the world by Pope John Paul II. We have admired him. We have loved him. We will miss him.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. Amen.