



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



Canonization of Pope John Paul II April 24, 2014

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate the holy lives of two beloved men. Their faithful service to the people of God throughout the world brings us to this moment of Grace for the whole Church when, for the first time, we call Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli and Karol Józef Wojtyła, Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II. These two men will forever be joined by the spirit and fruits of the Second Vatican Council that is an historic reference point for our understanding of what it means to build the Mystical Body of Christ.

These men of heroic virtue were certainly united in many ways by the awesome responsibility of serving as Vicars of Christ to the world. However, they were also remarkable examples of holiness. In the Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, the Church Fathers pointed to the universal call to holiness that we all share. In this document, we are reminded to live our lives as saints, "...and to put on as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and to possess the fruit of the Spirit in holiness. Since truly we all offend in many things we all need God's mercies continually and we all must daily pray: 'Forgive us our debts.'"

Selecting Divine Mercy Sunday to acknowledge our two new saints' place in heaven was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes their deep understanding of Jesus' commission of mercy given to the Church in today's Gospel: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." In his great humility, St. John XXIII helped us to understand God's great mercy and love reminding us to be patient with our imperfections, and seek the Father's healing of our hearts when he said: "*Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do.*"

When St. John Paul II declared Divine Mercy Sunday as a feast of the Church, he said that God's mercy had been the defining quality of his pontificate. He said that this day, was the happiest day of his life, for it was a day when he could shine the light of God's love on the whole Easter Mystery of Redemption, bringing to life the words of St. Peter in today's epistle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."

When this beloved saint celebrated Mass in San Antonio and walked among us, he urged us to find God's mercy in the confessional. In his homily he said: "The ministry of reconciliation is a fundamental part of the Church's life and mission. Without overlooking any of the many ways in which Christ's victory over sin becomes a reality in the life of the Church and of the world, it is important for me to emphasize that it is above all in the Sacrament of Forgiveness and Reconciliation that the power of the redeeming blood of Christ is made effective in our personal lives."

His words continued to echo in the hearts of San Antonians who recently celebrated 24 straight hours of confession here in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. During that time the light of Christ was made to shine brightly, helping believers and non-believers alike discover that through the Divine Mercy of God, unconditional love is possible and attainable. We need only to seek out God's forgiveness.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He was telling them, and us, that we are all commissioned to proclaim that mankind is once again made whole through the salvation of the cross. Again, looking at Vatican II, we see the spirit of our two new saints as the laity is called to share in the Church's mission, in the spirit of what St. John Paul II would ultimately call The New Evangelization. "Thus every layman, by virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church... We all are called to be instruments of His mercy and forgiveness "in common" with all we meet." This is the "Joyful shout of victory" that the Psalmist sings as he proclaims, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love is everlasting."

Today, we hold a special place in our hearts for St. John Paul II, for he was a saint who walked among us, he prayed in our churches, blessed our children, and proclaimed God's mercy in a way that still lives in our hearts. When St. John XXIII proclaimed, "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in.", he inspired St. John Paul II's heart call for the New Evangelization and work toward Christian unity. It was with windows wide open that St. John Paul II carried the spirit of St. John XXIII into the 21st century.

