

And after your appointment as Prelate in 1994, did you yourself have a similar relationship with John Paul II?

The Pope continued to be equally paternal and affectionate. For example, he telephoned me personally to announce my appointment as Prelate. I visited him on various occasions to inform him about the development of the apostolates of the Work and was able to see his joy. A few months after the appointment, he conferred on me ordination as a bishop. After the year 2000 the Pope was already quite sick, but he continued receiving me in audience with a certain frequency, to hear news of the apostolic activities of the Work all over the world. Three days after the death of the Pope, I went with Don Joaquin Alonso to pray before his mortal remains in St. Peter's Basilica, and to greet Don Stanislaw, who invited us to pray in his private chapel and later encouraged us to go up to the terrace of the apostolic palace. He wanted to show us the immense stream of people who were coming to pay their final respects to the Pope and all the television transmitters from all over the world installed around St. Peter's Square. Shortly afterwards, he gave me one of John Paul II's cassocks, so that we could keep it as a relic.

A "Shower of Graces" after the beatification of John Paul II, *Avvenire*, Italy (May 4, 2011)

A great happiness reigns in the Church today: the joy of the beatification of the beloved Pope John Paul II, whom all of us have listened to, venerated and followed in the long, fruitful years of his ministry as the Supreme Pastor of the Church. The reputation for holiness that he already enjoyed while alive, which helped the Church so much on the occasion of his passing, now takes on a new vigor. The recognition of his heroic virtues and a miraculous cure attributed to his intercession opened the way for his inscription in the list of the blessed, which Pope Benedict XVI carried out on May 3.

Every declaration of holiness proclaims the glory of the Trinity. But some, like the beatification of John Paul II, influence millions of people. We saw this when the Lord called him to Himself, six years ago, and I am convinced that the same thing will happen in these days. If we invoke with faith the intercession of the new Blessed in all our needs, great and small, personal and collective, a shower of graces will rain down from Heaven for all mankind.

Considering the repercussions that the life and death of John Paul II had on many people, I am reminded of a thought from *The Way*,

in which St. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer stresses the importance of responding faithfully to God when He calls. The Founder of Opus Dei wrote: “Many great things depend—don’t forget it—on whether you and I live our lives as God wants.”

This is what has happened in the case of John Paul II. From his youth, he always responded with a firm yes to the repeated calls of the Lord: to be a priest, then to be a bishop, and finally to accept the weight of serving the Church as the successor of Peter. In each case, as the then-Cardinal Ratzinger noted in his funeral Mass homily for the late pontiff, he had to renounce legitimate plans that he had already made.

John Paul II always maintained this total dedication. “In the first years of his pontificate—said Cardinal Ratzinger in the homily referred to earlier—young and full of energy, the Holy Father went to the very ends of the earth, guided by Christ. But afterward, he increasingly en-

tered into the communion of Christ’s sufferings; increasingly he understood the truth of the words: ‘someone else will dress you.’ And in this very communion with the suffering Lord, tirelessly and with renewed intensity, he proclaimed the Gospel, the mystery of that love which goes to the end (see *Jn* 13:1).

I would like to add that I have always been impressed by the coincidences of love for God that can be seen in the lives of Blessed John Paul II and Saint Josemaría. Both of them dedicated themselves completely to the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Virgen; both of them, conscious of their creaturely smallness, were devotees of the Divine Mercy: they recited with great piety those words invoking God as a Merciful Father that are so characteristic of this devotion.

Let us entrust these resolutions to Holy Mary as well. In this way, we will become, as John Paul II often said, *totus tuus*—all yours.