

But we know, through faith, that John Paul II has crossed "the threshold of hope" to await us, with his habitual goodness and peace, in the heavenly home everyone longs for.

From faith, too, arises our supernatural serenity. We neither want to, nor can we, cancel our sorrow, but we live it serenely, convinced that God has done what is best for so faithful a servant of his Church.

This is also the moment to pray for the next Pope, for whom we Catholics are ready from this moment to give all of our filial affection. I ask God to grant him grace and assistance in assuming a task with so much responsibility.

As for myself, I confidently ask for the protection of John Paul II, a good and faithful servant of the Lord, and I also ask him to intercede before God for his successor.

## *ABC* (Madrid) April 5, 2005

### *In the Father's House*

John Paul II spoke to us in many ways. He spoke through encyclicals, homilies, addresses, letters and books—through his words, his writings, and the images he left us. He often employed the language of symbols, with eloquent gestures full of meaning. All of these actions sprang from the depths of a soul intimately united with Jesus Christ, and therefore carried with them the communicative power of the Word of God.

These thoughts kept running my mind on the evening of Saturday,

April 2. It seemed to me that the whole day had seen a succession of signs of deep eloquence. In the morning we heard the halting words that he addressed to young people—his last message: "I have sought you out; now you are the ones who have come close to me, and I thank you for it." As some of the television programs in Italy said, April 2nd was an unexpected and improvised "World Youth Day." By nightfall, 100,000 persons were praying to our Lady for the Pope, as he was dying. And our Lady graciously accepted the prayer of her children for their father. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." John Paul II seems to have died just as the prayers in the Square were ending, and the final "Amen" was a farewell to him. Before this, at eight o'clock, Bishop Stanislaus Dziwisz celebrated the Mass of Divine Mercy Sunday. Is there any message that could be more consoling for one who is dying? The Merciful Love of God the Father is waiting for you in heaven, the definitive dwelling of Love

To me, April 2, seems filled with symbolism, coincidences that were impossible to foresee, impossible to organize. Only the Providence of God, rich in mercy, could unite the prayer of thousands of children for their father, before the Blessed Virgin, on the eve of the universal feast of Divine Mercy.

All of those circumstances speak to us not only with the language of words or the expressiveness of emotions, but with the beauty of symbols, which leave an indelible imprint on the soul.

The liturgy for the funeral of John Paul II puts on our lips a beautiful

prayer, in the preface of the Mass for the dead, which confirms us in “the hope of our happy resurrection.” How forcefully the Church declares that “the sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality”! How natural it is for us to imagine the Pope in the presence of the Blessed Trinity, in a life that will never end. For we know that “for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.”

John Paul II possessed many qualities and gifts. Some people will now stress his role in the history of the Church and of humanity, his human and supernatural virtues, his talents. For me, as for countless men and women all over the world, the Pope was, above all, a father. In him we deeply experienced the reality that the Church is united by the bonds of communion proper to a family. The Pope is a father for Catholics from many different countries; he is the principle and foundation of unity in the Church, the source of fraternity among all men, the promoter of peace.

I dare to say that John Paul II portrayed in an outstanding way the principal role of his life, the role of father, the function of vicar of Christ. He did so with his whole personality, as an image and living symbol among us. May we all understand and put into practice what God is asking of us in such a clear way, making the Church, as John Paul II urged, “a home and school of communion.”

Today we have so many reasons to be grateful: to God, for the gift of this Pope; to John Paul II, for his strong and gentle fidelity; to so many people, eminent or unknown, who were his collaborators throughout these almost 27 years. We are especially grateful to those who cared for him with filial love up to the last moment: to Archbishop Dziwisz, Father Stanislaus, his faithful aide throughout his life; to the religious sisters, whose names do not appear in the papers; to Poland, who gave the Church such an illustrious son; to the doctors looking after him; to the journalists who have been describing to us, with deep emotion, these painful and unique moments.

Pope John Paul II would often say, when people sometimes asked him not to expend such a great physical effort: “after one Pope there comes another.” I think we can detect here not only his awareness of being in this world only in passing, like all men and women, but also his certainty of having been put by the Holy Spirit in the see of Peter not to be acclaimed as a man, but to strive to ensure that mankind acclaims God.

In these days Catholics are already praying for the next Pope, whoever he may be. And we are also praying to our beloved John Paul II that he intercede before God for his successor. There come to mind some words of St. Josemaría Escrivá: “I thought the words on loyalty that you sent to me was very appropriate: ‘I carry with me every day in my heart, in my mind and

on my lips, an aspiration: Rome!” The name of a city, a prayer, a bond of union for all Catholics, for all men of good will.

## Rome

### April 19, 2005

#### *On the election of Benedict XVI*

Today is a moment of great joy for the entire Church. Catholics all over the world are giving thanks to God for the gift of a new Pope, Benedict XVI. Once again his children turn their eyes to Peter’s successor, finding in him light and serenity.

In my name, and with the certainty that I am expressing the sentiments of the men and women who make up the Prelature of Opus Dei, I assure Benedict XVI of our fullest union both with him and with his teachings: a deep communion. The new Pope is well acquainted with the Prelature’s mission and knows he can count on the cheerful efforts of the priests and lay people who form part of it in order to serve the Church, which was St. Josemaría Escrivá’s only ambition. Along with our union with him, I also want to transmit to him my deep filial affection, joined to the prayer and affection of all the faithful of Opus Dei.

During these days of trust-filled waiting, there has been a lot of talk about the Roman Pontiff’s immense responsibility, about the Church’s need for his ministry, and the weight of the mission that rests on his shoulders. All

of this is true. But we are also seeing now how the Pope, besides God’s help, can rely on the support of the prayer and affection of all Catholics and of so many other persons of good will.

The circumstances surrounding the death of John Paul II and the election of Benedict XVI have been a marvelous manifestation of faith on the part of millions of persons and a moving expression of unity: in a shared sorrow first of all, at the loss of our beloved John Paul II, and also in their joy at the gift of a new Pope. May John Paul II protect his successor in this moment of a new springtime!

I am also struck, as is only natural, by the Church’s marvelous continuity, so clearly reflected in the joy of the People of God at the election of Peter’s new successor.

## *La Gaceta de los*

### *Negocios (Madrid)*

### May 7, 2005

#### *Faith and Unity*

On the evening of April 19, when the *fumata bianca* announced the election of the new Pope, the people who had crowded into St. Peter’s Square burst into uncontrollable applause. And this scene was repeated in many other cities and countries all over the world. No one knew yet who had been elected. The cries of joy were not for a particular person. They were for St. Peter’s Successor and the Vicar of