

With Two Popes @ Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Natasha Lardera (April 29, 2014)



Sunday 27, 2014: the Canonization of John XXIII and John Paul II. New York City wanted to take part to the celebrations for the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland and the Consulate General of Italy organized a special evening at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. The festivities included performances of religious music and readings of selected excerpts of both Pope's encyclicals.

On Sunday April 27, New York City wanted to take part to the celebrations for the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, known to be the pope who started the Second Vatican Council, and Karol Wojtyla, known to be pontiff during the Cold War and the era of globalization, were proclaimed saints on that same day as desired by Pope Francis.

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The festivities included performances of religious music and readings of selected excerpts of both Pope's encyclicals. The songs were performed by tenor Francesco Pavesi, mezzo soprano Edyta Kulczak and organist Eugeniusz Wawrzyniak, while the readings were executed by professor and journalist Antonio Monda, by popular jazz singer Urszula Dudziak, and by the mayor of Allentown (Pennsylvania) Ed Pawlowski.

A crowd of 80% Polish Catholics, of international tourists and some Italians, was welcomed by Rev. Monsignor Robert Ritchie, rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral, who spoke in the name of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who was in Rome for the celebrations in Vatican City. "Cardinal Dolan has always been a great admirer of Pope John Paul II, since a young age," Ritchie said, "Each year, for the past nine years, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland has organized a special evening to remember and celebrate him. This year the event is different, it's more special because of the canonization, and we could not be more honored. Saint Patrick's cathedral is a place where people come for the love of God, let me welcome you all in our embrace and moment of joy."

"Today we celebrate two Popes in three languages in the international community of New York City," Hon. Ewa Junczyk-Ziomecka, the Consul General of Poland said, "So let this be a multicultural presentation. John Paul II was the second longest standing Pope, the first non Italian since Pope Adrian VI (who died in 1523), a world traveler (he visited 129 countries during his pontificate) whose scope was to bring people together by building bridges between Christians and believers of other religions. John XXIII, also known as "Il Papa Buono" (the Good Pope) opened the Second Vatican Council. His passionate views on equality were summed up in his famous statement: "We were all made in God's image, and thus, we are all Godly alike." Both loved for breaking down barriers, fighting for human rights and bringing together people of different faiths. How do we speak to a community of people coming from different cultures? With the universal language of music."

"We are so thankful to the Polish Consulate for allowing us to join in the extraordinary celebrations that have taken place in Rome and also to take part to this special evening they have organized for the past 9 years," Hon. Natalia Quintavalle, Consul General of Italy said, "these two Popes have left an indelible mark on the soul of our society as they changed the course of human history. Tonight we are here, all together, to express our affection and our gratitude. As many of you don't know him well, I want to tell you something about John XXIII. He made many passionate speeches during his pontificate, one of which was on the day that he announced the Second Vatican Council in the middle of the night to the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square. "Il Discorso della Luna" was given on October 11th 1962."

The council, formally opened under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII and under Pope Paul VI in 1965, became ideally known for its renewal of Catholic doctrine in a modern time line and perspective. Pope John XXIII spoke directly to the children and told them that the moon was looking down at them and at that special night at Saint Peter's Square. He spoke directly to their parents too asking them to go home and "caress your children and tell them that the caress was from the Pope. You will find some tears to dry, say a good word: the Pope is with us, especially in times of sadness and bitterness."

On that day in 1962 his words made quite an impression, and they were as effective just a few days ago, on April 27, 2014. People were visibly overcome and came together in celebrating the two popes who have distinctly acquired a global role and become a point of reference around the world during their pontificates.

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