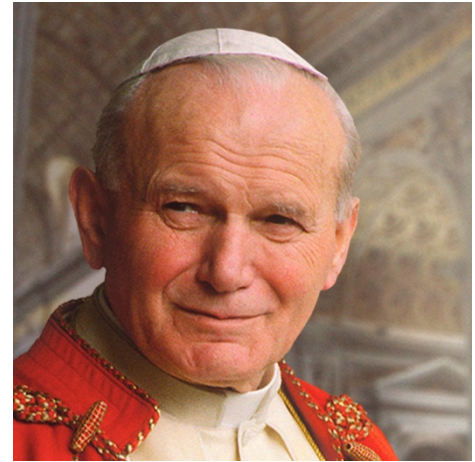


## The Legacy of Saint John Paul II: “Totally Yours”

By James Peck

“Be not afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch!” With these words, Saint John Paul II introduced a bold, forward-looking vision of hope to the world as he began his pontificate in October 1978. His love for God and vision of the inviolable dignity of each person brought focus and determination throughout his 26-year papacy, one marked with several significant accomplishments furthering the mission of Christ’s Church.



Saint John Paul II’s legacy finds its roots in the suffering of Poland, a country that lost its brief independence first to Nazi Germany and then to Soviet Russia. His youth was marked by both the tragic deaths of his mother and elder brother as well as his father’s love and deep devotion to prayer. This paternal example seeded a strong faith in the young saint, whose early formation was influenced by the contemplative vision of Saint John of the Cross and the Marian devotion of Saint Louis de Montfort. From an early age John Paul developed a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother, making frequent pilgrimages to Czestochowa, praying repeatedly before the holy icon “*totus tuus*” (I am totally yours).

A signature of his legacy is his role in the geopolitical collapse of Soviet communism. His first papal visit to Poland in 1979 was the spark that lit the Solidarity movement in 1980. This spark led to the collapse of the Polish regime in 1989, and ultimately to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. John Paul II’s papacy emboldened the faithful with a focus on youth, family, and a culture of life to counter Western materialism and the culture of death. His commitment to the vision of the Second Vatican Council yielded rich fruit in the 1993 publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II fostered dialogue and understanding in the relationship of faith and science. He promoted ecumenical dialogue and fostered prayer for unity among all Christians and prayer for peace with peoples of all faiths, being the first Pope to visit a Jewish synagogue and the first to visit a Muslim mosque. This missionary spirit carried him to visit 129 countries and 879 cities. Following his death in 2005, John Paul was beatified in 2011 and canonized as Saint John Paul II in 2014.

In addition to his many achievements in the Church and in the world, it is fitting that the Arizona Rosary Celebration recognize John Paul II’s promotion of the rosary. The rosary was an important part of John Paul II’s spiritual life from the time of his youth and was his favorite prayer throughout his papacy. He beatified and canonized many worthy patrons of the rosary, including Bartolo Longo, Padre Pio, Josemaria Escriva, George Preca, and Pope Pius IX. In proposing the Luminous Mysteries, John Paul II brought out the full Christological depth of the rosary with meditations on Christ as the light of the world, God’s definitive revelation. He declared October 2002 to October 2003 as the Year of the Rosary in which he exhorted the Church to learn Christ anew at the School of Mary, the rosary. Most importantly Saint John Paul II taught us that the rosary is truly a contemplative prayer, a prayer in which we encounter the living Christ. In meditating on the mysteries of the rosary we come to know Christ personally, in friendship and as family, as Mary knew Christ. There is no more fitting way to honor Saint John Paul II’s legacy than through a renewed devotion to the holy rosary. *Totus tuus*.