



Statement on the Beatification of Blessed Pope John Paul II

*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Los Angeles, California
April 29, 2011*

I am overjoyed that the Church is declaring Pope John Paul II to be “blessed.”

His beatification will be a beautiful grace for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, for California, and for all the nations of the Americas and the rest of the world.

I feel connected to Blessed John Paul by bonds of filial affection and deep ties of grace.

I was a new priest, ordained just three months, when he was named Pope on October 22, 1978. He called me to be a bishop in 2001 and, not long before his death in 2005, he called me to be an archbishop.

I knew him as a wise and holy spiritual father. And I feel the hand of Providence at work in his being beatified as I begin my ministry here in Los Angeles.

Blessed John Paul’s teaching and personal witness continue to inspire my pastoral ministry.

He was a great apostle, a witness to the resurrection for our time. He taught us that Jesus Christ is the answer to every human question. In the encounter with Christ, he told us, we discover God’s merciful face and find the true meaning of our lives.

He told us that in Christ we are all called to be holy, to live our lives for God’s glory, and for the love and service our neighbors. And he called us to join him in building a civilization of love and a culture of life.

These were not original ideas. They are the essence of the Gospel.

Blessed John Paul’s gift was to make the Christian ideal seem new again. He lived the Gospel with a passion and intelligence that was compelling and attractive. He made the Catholic way of life look so beautiful, so alive. He inspired many to want to follow him, to share the joy of his friendship with Jesus Christ, to dedicate themselves to what he called the “high standard of ordinary Christian living.”

Blessed John Paul visited nearly every region of the United States, from Alaska to Miami and from Boston to Los Angeles. Millions of Americans heard him speak.

He honored the Archdiocese of Los Angeles with a pastoral visit on Sept. 15–16, 1987. He was welcomed by then-Archbishop Roger Mahony and retired Cardinal Timothy Manning.

He met with cultural leaders and leaders of other religions. He visited with Catholic school children. He celebrated Mass at St. Vibiana's Cathedral, at Dodger Stadium and the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. He gathered all the bishops of the United States here to meet and to pray together. He used his visit to Los Angeles to make a special act of entrusting our nation to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

His message to our local Church was bold: We must remember the deep Christian and immigrant roots of our region and nation. He reminded us: before the American Revolution, Blessed Junípero Serra and the Franciscans were preaching the Gospel and celebrating the Eucharist in this land.

He told us that our local Church is an icon of what Christ intends his Catholic Church to be — one family of God drawn from every nation, race and culture. He drew this beautiful portrait of our Church:

“Today in the Church in Los Angeles: Christ is Anglo and Hispanic. Christ is Chinese and Black. Christ is Vietnamese and Irish. Christ is Korean and Italian. Christ is Japanese and Filipino. Christ is Native American, Croatian, Samoan, and many other ethnic groups.

“In this local Church, the one risen Christ, the one Lord and Savior, is living in each person who has accepted the Word of God and been washed clean in the saving waters of baptism. And the Church, with all her different members, remains the one Body of Christ, professing the same faith, united in hope and in love.”

Blessed John Paul sowed the seeds for a new springtime of holiness and Christian mission. Those seeds are already bearing fruit in the lives of millions of Catholics and others.

I pray that his beatification will lead many more to be inspired by his life and teachings — in Los Angeles, and throughout our continent and world.