

“If you believe in peace it is possible. If it is possible it is a duty.”

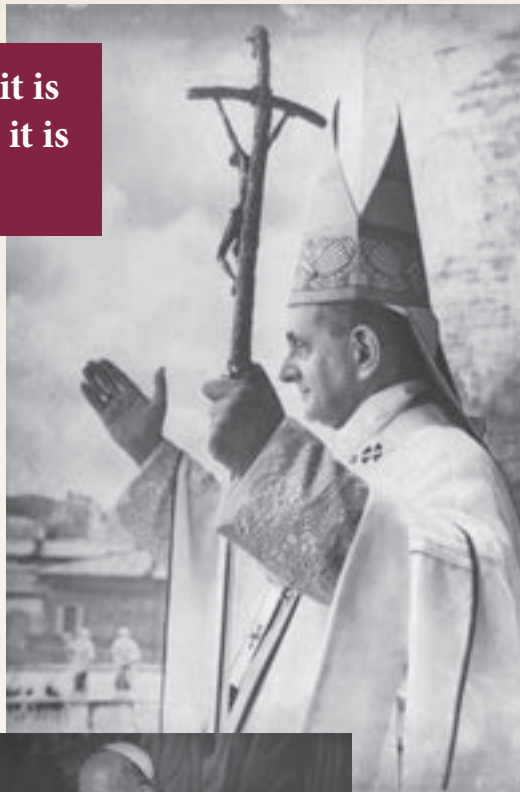
many being brought back to practice their faith. Montini believed a pastor must go out in search of souls, and he modeled that. He went to great strides to visit even the most far-flung parishes of his vast archdiocese — sometimes even riding a donkey to get somewhere.

In 1958, Pope John XXIII was elected. He and Montini had known each other for years, having served together in the Holy See’s diplomatic corps. The new pope wasted no time in drawing upon Montini’s wealth of knowledge and expertise. Quickly becoming one of Pope John’s closest advisers, Montini was named the first cardinal of John’s pontificate in a consistory later that year. After Pope John called the Second Vatican Council, Montini was enlisted by the pope to help oversee preparations.

Pope

When Pope John died, Cardinal Montini was rumored to be the natural successor. Elected pope on June 23, 1963, Montini chose to be called Paul VI in honor of St. Paul, the apostle to the gentiles.

Having taken leadership of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul also had the task of overseeing its implementation. With humility and perseverance, he led the Church to embrace its role in the modern world. This involved presiding over many internal reforms of the Church — including a sweeping revision of the



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Church’s liturgy. Without hesitation Pope Paul pursued Christian unity through groundbreaking encounters and dialogue with many of our separated brothers and sisters.

Always an intellectual, Pope Paul was a prolific writer. His teachings left a major contribution to the Church’s magisterium and covered the gamut. Topics include Eucharistic doctrine, missionary activity, marriage and family, artificial contraception, devotion to Mary, priestly celibacy, ecclesiology, human rights and dignity, religious freedom, economics, and world peace.

Pope Paul’s 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, released at the height of the “sexual revolution,” courageously explained why the Church must be opposed to artificial contraception. The widespread dissent that followed its publication caused him much sadness and suffering, and he never wrote another encyclical.

Often referred to as the “Pilgrim Pope,” Pope Paul traveled to an unprecedented twenty countries. The first pope ever to visit the Western Hemisphere, he also was the first pope to visit the United States in 1965 when he became the first to address the United Nations. Pope Paul often visited hospitals and schools on his travels inside and outside of Rome.

Pope Paul VI died on Aug. 6, 1978 — the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord — at the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, not far from Rome. Following his wishes, he was given a simple funeral and a humble grave.

Saint

A cause for Pope Paul VI’s canonization was opened in 1993. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI declared his life of heroic virtue to be worthy of veneration, and he was beatified by Pope Francis in 2014. The two miracles that paved the way for his 2018 canonization involved children still in the womb.

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Pope St. Paul VI

A Saint for Our Time



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“I believe. I hope. I love.”

Pope St. Paul VI served as 261st successor of St. Peter from 1963–78, during what many would regard as turbulent times for the Church and the world. He shepherded the Church through a time of reform and renewal, and he maintained a relevant voice for the Gospel in a rapidly changing society.

As circumstances demanded, St. Paul VI took decisive action on a number of important issues. In many ways, he had the strength and determination of a prophet. It fell upon him to implement the work of the Second Vatican Council, steering the Church through a variety of changes and reforms.

Shy and bookish, St. Paul VI's austerity and contemplative nature made him complex, often leaving him misunderstood. Competing voices in the Church equally criticized him. Some said his leadership went too far and others said he did not go far enough. His confessor said that if he had not achieved sanctity by the time he was elected, then the years of his papacy are what proved it. Whatever his shortcomings, he was the kind of man needed to hand on the timeless Catholic faith in an age fraught with difficulties.

Man of Virtue

Perhaps St. Paul VI's mentor Pope Pius XII summed him up best when, upon meeting the parents of his future successor, he purportedly said, “You have given the Church of Jesus Christ a man who possesses all the



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virtues to an eminent degree.”

Shirking intimidation from the task God gave him, St. Paul VI embraced his role as pope with hope and joy. An abiding friendship with the Lord and profound spiritual life sustained him in his vocation as a priest, bishop, and pope. He had a tireless work ethic, borne from a sense of duty and pastoral concern. And while his personality made it difficult for him to feel at ease in the constant public interaction required of his office, he did not shy away from the fanfare associated with the papacy.

St. Paul VI took on a great deal of suffering in his life, brought on mostly from poor health or in the wake of difficult decisions. Some suffering was taken on willingly, as it was reported he often wore chains under his cassock to bind himself more closely to the suffering Christ.

Toward the end of the Second Vatican Council, St. Paul VI wrote in his journal, “Perhaps the Lord has called me and preserved me for this service not because I am particularly fit for it, or so that I can govern and

rescue the Church from her present difficulties, but so that I can suffer something for the Church, and in that way it will be clear that he, and no other, is her guide and savior.”

Early life

Born Giovanni Battista Montini on Sept. 26, 1897, at his family's summer cottage — not too far from their hometown of Brescia, Italy — the future pope nearly died at birth. From then on he was plagued with poor health and a weak constitution. Most of his first year was spent away from family with a wet nurse, upon whom his survival depended.

In God's providence, the future pope's parents met on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican while on pilgrimage. His father, Giorgio, was a lawyer and journalist, who lent a Catholic voice to Italian politics, even serving in parliament.

Intellectually gifted from childhood, Montini did very well in school. Given to frequent bouts of illness, his family's upper middle class means made it possible for him to secure a tutor to stay on top of his studies despite frequent absences. As an introvert, he typically kept to himself.

Montini considered following in his father's footsteps, but he also contemplated the priesthood. Initially drawn to Benedictine life, it was suggested he look elsewhere on account of his health. That too kept him from being accepted into military service during World War I.

Recognizing Montini's desire to offer his life in service of God and others, his bishop accepted him for seminary studies. Despite his frailties, Montini's bishop knew his intellectual gifts would be of great service to the Church. Ordained a priest on May 29, 1920, in Brescia, Montini celebrated his first Mass the next day, wearing a chasuble that had been fashioned from his mother Giudecca's wedding dress.



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Vatican Official

Montini was sent to Rome for further studies shortly after ordination, with the expectation to return home eventually. Unbeknownst to him, a political ally of his father recommended Montini for work in civil service for the Holy See, leading to ministry in the Holy See's Secretariat of State for more than 30 years.

Always dutiful and obedient, he accepted this assignment as God's will, though he would have rather served as a simple parish priest. Alongside his work for the Holy See, Montini spent a decade in chaplaincy with the federation of Italian university students. He cherished the experience and through it developed many friendships.

Montini became the protégé and trusted collaborator of Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli — then the Holy See's Secretary of State and the future Pope Pius XII. Effectively serving as his “right hand,” Montini was tasked with behind-the-scenes work in a variety of the Church's diplomatic efforts and general management of the Roman Curia. His reputation as a good priest combined with intellect, vision, work ethic and attention to detail made him ideal for the job.

When Montini's mentor was elected pope in 1939, he continued at the Secretariat of State but also split his duties to serve as the pope's private secretary. And during World War II, in addition to his ordinary responsibilities, Montini led the organization of the Holy See's humanitarian efforts, providing assistance to millions of prisoners of war, refugees and children.

Archbishop of Milan

Pope Pius XII assigned Montini to be archbishop of Milan, Italy, in 1954, telling his new flock that Montini was the pope's “personal gift” to them. His time there was filled with pastoral opportunities, with a special focus on bringing back to the Faith those who had abandoned it in an increasingly secular culture. Efforts to reach out to the working classes, many of whom left the Church under Communism's influence, resulted in

“All life demands struggle. Those who have everything given to them become lazy, selfish, and insensitive to the real values of life. The very striving and hard work that we so constantly try to avoid is the major building block in the person we are today.”