

The text below is from the transcript of the Hallow series on Saint John Paul II. He host of the series is Msgr. James Shea and assisted by actor Jim Caviezel. The series included 21 sessions (average time of 12 minutes each). Here are Msgr. Shea's introduction to the series:

Hello and welcome to Hallow and our series on Pope John Paul II! My name is Msgr. James Shea, and I serve as the President of the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. I had the privilege of studying for the priesthood in Rome during John Paul II's pontificate, and I have many fond memories of him.

Throughout this series, we'll be joined by two special guests, Jim Caviezel and Jackie Angel, to share about the impact he had on their lives and on the universal Church. We're very excited to dive into this series with you as we take an extended look at his life over the next 21 days.

John Paul II is truly an extraordinary figure. Even just a quick glance at some of the numbers and figures surrounding his papacy boggle the mind.

Here are a few: He visited over 129 countries, by far the most of any pope.

These trips covered over 775,000 miles, the equivalent of 31 times around the globe or 3 times to the moon.

It's believed that over a half billion people saw him in person during his various audiences.

He canonized 482 saints, more than all his predecessors over the past 500 years combined.

If you put together everything he wrote, it would equal the length of 20 Bibles.

Among other things, he's responsible for the creation of World Youth Day, Theology of the Body, and the current version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

He served as Pope for 27 years from 1978 to 2005, the third longest reign of any pope ever. As you can see, John Paul II's life is nothing short of prolific. And yet, his papacy is not without misunderstanding.

In his biography Witness to Hope, George Weigel notes both the acclaim and the controversy surrounding the legacy of John Paul II.

He begins, "John Paul II has... been, indisputably, the most visible pope in history. In fact, a case can be made that he has been the most visible human being in history... Yet there is a paradox here: this most visible of men may also be the least understood major figure of the

twentieth century. Certainly, the judgments about the man and his [accomplishments] have been, to put it gently, contradictory.

To tens of millions of people, many of whom are not Roman Catholics, he is the great figure of our time, the defender and principal embodiment of a moral force that has led humanity safely through this bloodiest of centuries. In this view, John Paul II is the paladin, the champion, of the cause of human freedom.

To others, including many in his own Church, John Paul II is an unyielding authoritarian, out of touch with the aspirations of those he claims to lead and dares to teach.”

Weigel rightly points out this great paradox about John Paul II. While being one of the most important figures of the 20th century, he is also controversial. The purpose of Weigel’s biography *Witness to Hope* and the purpose of this series here on Hallow is to get to the heart of who this great man was.

How will we do this? Well, as Weigel insists, it’s important to get to know the man from the inside. So, we’ll do this by drawing upon stories in George Weigel’s book, *Witness to Hope*, an amazing best-selling biography on Pope John Paul II. We’ll hear intimate snapshots of a man from humble beginnings who experienced multiple family tragedies, who risked his life to go through college and seminary during Nazi occupation, who heroically led a Church amidst a Communist regime, and who overcame all odds to become the first non-Italian Pope in almost 500 years.

We’ll then see how as pope, he helped take down communism, survived assassination attempts, preached to millions around the world, and brought the Church into the 3rd millennium.

Hopefully, our time together will be much more than an exercise in history, but rather a powerful encounter with a disciple of Jesus Christ. John Paul II’s most enduring legacy was his ability to transform the lives of individual people. So many Catholics attribute their conversions to an experience with him. So many ministries and apostolates were developed as a result of his words and initiatives.

There was something about him that called men and women to something more.

At a time when relativism reigned, he was a voice of truth.

In a period of darkness, he was a light to the world.

In an age of despair, he was a witness to hope. I pray that our time with this man will transform our own lives. And, to that end, we’ll close this portion of our time together with a quote from John Paul II and then enter into a time of prayer and meditation.

From John Paul II's Installation Mass, 22 October 1978

"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Mt 16:16)

"Be not afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization, and development.

"Be not afraid. Christ knows 'what is in man.' He alone knows it. The world, he reflected, was afraid of itself and of its future. To all those who were afraid, to all those caught in the great loneliness of the modern world, 'I ask you... I beg you, let Christ speak to [you]. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life.'"

Let us offer a prayer that Saint John Paul II recited throughout his life, beginning in his childhood, after his father gave him a devotional on the Holy Spirit. In this prayer, we'll invoke the Holy Spirit and ask for an increase of His seven gifts within us.

“Holy Spirit, I ask you for the gift of Wisdom to better know You and Your divine perfections,

for the gift of Understanding to clearly discern the spirit of the mysteries of the holy faith,

for the gift of Counsel that I may live according to the principles of this faith,

*for the gift of Knowledge that I may look for counsel in You and that I may always find it in
You,*

*for the gift of Fortitude that no fear or earthly preoccupations would ever separate me from
You,*

for the gift of Piety that I may always serve Your Majesty with a filial love,

for the gift of the Fear of the Lord that I may dread sin, which offends You, O my God. Amen.