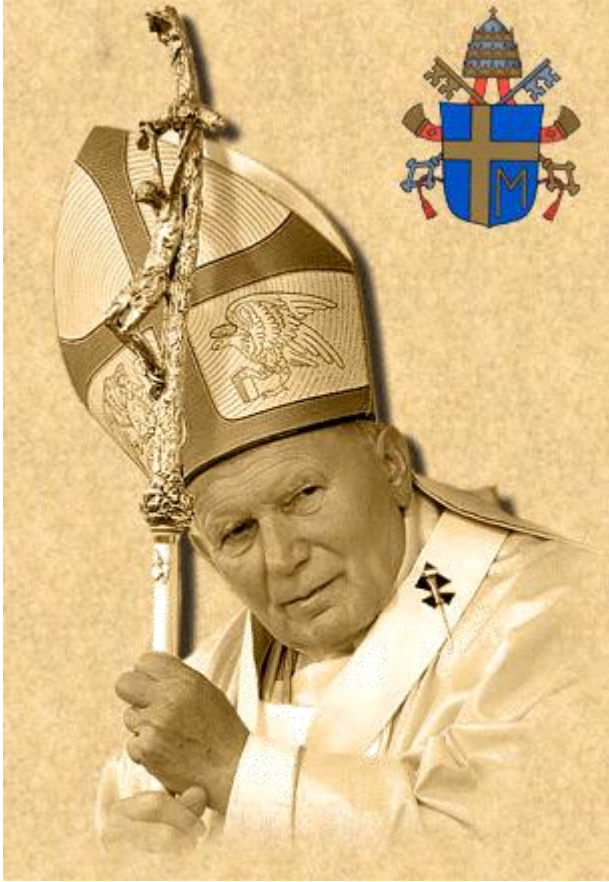


**Not just a sower,
but a tiller as well**

A tribute to Pope John Paul II

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Not just a sower, but a tiller as well

"The person is a being for whom the only suitable dimension is love. We are just to a person if we love him. This is as true for God as it is for man. Love for a person excludes the possibility of treating him as an object of pleasure...."

"Man affirms himself most completely by giving of himself. This is the fulfillment of the commandment of love. This is also the full truth about man, a truth that Christ taught us by His life, and that the tradition of Christian morality...took up and lived out in the course of history."

"If we deprive human freedom of this possibility, if man does not commit himself to becoming a gift for others, then this freedom can become dangerous. It will

become freedom to do what I myself consider as a good, what brings me profit or pleasure, even sublimated pleasure. If we cannot accept the prospect of giving ourselves as a gift, then the danger of selfish freedom will always be present." (His Holiness John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 201f)

The above texts from Pope John Paul II's *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* clearly summarize his personalist view of man (used here generically to include both men and women). This view of man is solidly grounded not simply on Jesus Christ's teachings, but primarily on his life and actions, providing a model for Karol Wojtyla to emulate throughout his entire life, until death.

From a very early age, Karol Wojtyla embraced in earnest and with deep faith Jesus Christ's injunction to his disciples when they saw him walking upon the sea. Noting that they were troubled and concerned for his safety, Jesus told them: "Take courage: it is I, do not be afraid" (Mark 6:49f). Filled with the grace and courage he derived from a life lived in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, Karol Wojtyla went on to show a troubled world the true meaning of the Christian message by personal example.

Like Jesus he was not simply a 'sower' of the word, but by his each and every action he was also a 'tiller of the soil', of those regions of man's inner domain that modern secular life has left fallow and empty. He challenged the modern mind with a view of man in

which the human person is of infinite value to his Creator; in which human life is considered a gift of God to be received with profound gratitude and reverence; and in which human freedom is treated as purposive, to be exercised through choices that are aimed at promoting what is right and just not only for ourselves but for our fellow men and women as well. For ultimately, genuine human freedom is achieved in those human acts through which we give of ourselves completely in the service of our neighbour and God. That is at the core of the kind of Christian personalism that Pope John Paul II advocated.

Jesus Christ provided his disciples and contemporaries with an opportunity to glimpse into the mystery of the kingdom of God. Likewise, Pope John Paul II gave the modern world a glance into what is possible when men and women of good will come together to work for peace and justice in this world. Moreover, through a life lived in imitation of Christ, Pope John Paul II, was able to communicate the boundless love and mercy God has for each man and woman, young and old, living on this good Earth—an opportunity to get a glimpse of God Himself. He was able to put an image to God for the countless individuals who met him during his travels. To the billions of people devoid of any semblance of the transcendent in their lives, Pope John II seemed to reassure them that God was in their midst and that he loved them.

To a world eager, anxious to see some sign of God, craving for a taste of the divine in their lives he responded, very much like Jesus did to Philip, when Philip asked him, "Lord show us the Father and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, 'Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known me? Philip, he who sees me sees also the Father....The words that I speak to you I speak not on my own authority. But the Father dwelling in me, it is he who does the works'."(John 14:8-10). Through his teachings and as successor to St. Peter, through his actions (in prayer and in public) he too showed the Father to the world.

During Pope John Paul II's pontificate, the Church and the Vatican State came to realize a critical role that they can play in promoting peace and social justice in the world. The papacy has been able to assume a much needed moral leadership role in a world that is floundering in a whirlpool of moral relativism and greed. As a good 'sower' of the word and 'tiller' of men's and women's hearts and minds, Pope John Paul II managed to awaken the human spirit in our times to the transcendent in human existence. There is still much 'sowing' and 'tilling' to be done until we can reap a rich harvest. It is our hope and prayer that the next Bishop of Rome will continue to build on the groundwork started by Pope John Paul II.

Requiem aeternam dona ei Domine and lux perpetua luceat ei. Requiescat in pace.