

A Faithful Servant

Roman Catholics around the world, and many others, too, are mourning the passing of Pope John Paul II. The doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome were opened to the public Monday afternoon for the viewing of his body. This came after the pontiff's body was ceremoniously carried from the Clementine Chapel past a sea of more than 100,000 pilgrims. A papal spokesman said they will be allowed into the St. Peter's Basilica to view the body at almost all hours.

John Paul's funeral will be held Friday at 10 a.m. He will be buried at the St. Peter's Basilica grotto. The funeral will include pageantry reserved for the highest prince of the church, with many of the world's secular and religious leaders attending. An estimated 2 million people from around the world will travel to Rome to mourn the pope. President George Bush will lead the U.S. delegation to Rome on Wednesday, and other delegates may include former President George H.W. Bush and former President Bill Clinton.

John Paul died Saturday of septic shock and cardio-circulatory collapse at age 84. The death certificate listed the ailments he suffered, including Parkinson's disease.

As God's representative on this earth, Pope John Paul preached a message of peace, hope and promise. President Bush, who met with the pope three times during his presidency, called him "a courageous person. He's a moral person. He was a godly person." He said John Paul will be remembered for the huge influence he had on young people around the world and how he demonstrated "that one man can make a difference in people's lives." In his role as pope since 1978, John Paul, without question, accomplished a world of good.

What about you and me? We don't occupy the position of influence and authority that was accorded to John Paul by the College of Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church. But we do have the same high calling. God expects each of His followers, you see, to be His ambassadors in this world. We, too, are called to proclaim a message of peace, hope and promise. We are to lift up the name of Jesus, and to share the good news of His love, grace and sacrifice on the cross. We are to tell the world of His conquest of death through the resurrection, and that He seeks to give eternal life and fellowship with Him to all who believe in Him.

So our message, then, is no different than the one John Paul faithfully delivered. Will we be true to our commission?

--Beecher Hunter