

Knights of Columbus host Mass for Polish pilgrims in Rome :: Catholic News Agency (CNA)

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Archbishop William Lori celebrates Mass with with Knights of Columbus for Polish pilgrims in Rome on April 26, 2014 Credit: Elise Harris/CNA

Vatican City, Apr 26, 2014 / 05:39 am (CNA/EWTN News).- In honor of the canonizations of Bl. John Paul II and John XXIII the Knights of Columbus donated two fields in Rome where Polish pilgrims can camp, also holding a Mass led by their Supreme chaplain.

"We had a tremendously close relationship with John Paul II during his papacy," Supreme Knight Carl Anderson told CNA April 24 regarding the Saints, "So, for the Knights of Columbus, this is a wonderful, wonderful day."

The world's largest fraternal service organization, the Knights of Columbus was founded by Venerable Fr. Michael J. McGivney in 1882 and has donated nearly \$100,000 to support Vatican Television's, CTV, broadcast of the canonizations.

In addition the Knights have also donated two of their sports fields in Rome to Polish pilgrims who traveled to participate in the canonizations. Some 1,000 pilgrims were expected to make use of the fields. A Mass was also held Saturday morning, which was presided over by their Supreme chaplain, Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore.

Recalling the first time he met Bl. John Paul II in 1981, Anderson explained that he has "had the opportunity to be with him many times since," and was particularly struck by the pontiff's "great leadership, his personal sanctity, his holiness."

"So today is a dream come true to be here with his canonization," he expressed, highlighting that for many years the Saint led "the renewal of the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council."

He then drew attention to the Polish Pope's accomplishments in the areas of marriage and family, the new evangelization, his vision of unity for the Church in the Americas, the liberation of Europe and his great strides in renewing religious vocations.

"It is really the Pope and maybe even the Saint of the 20th century and we hope for the 21st century."

"John Paul II told us that man is created out of love, for love. He is a being who's meaning in life doesn't have purpose or meaning, really, without love," Anderson went on to say, reflecting that "this is the great legacy of John Paul II and if we become that kind of loving disciple, then we will have lives of joy."

Speaking of the renewal process the Church is currently undergoing with Pope Francis, the Knight observed that "there is a great continuity between Saint John Paul II and Pope Francis."

"Of the 'Joy of the Gospel,' of the way that the Pope becomes for the world a person of witness of the discipleship of Christ," he continued, adding that "The courage, the hopefulness – all of this we saw in John Paul II with the vigor of a youthful papacy and now we see many of the same attributes with Pope Francis."

"Bringing the message, opening the doors to Christ, having courage, not being afraid – not being afraid of the difficult questions. We are very, very lucky to be blessed with these holy Popes during our lifetime," he affirmed.

Archbishop Lori, who is leading a group of about 40 pilgrims from his diocese in Baltimore, also reflected on the importance of the canonization of such significant figures, telling CNA April 24 that "It seems to me that John XXIII was the Lord's instrument in convoking the Second Vatican Council."

The Council he noted, was "calling the Church to a new Pentecost and calling the Church to embrace its patrimony its teaching its inner life – and to bring that outward to the modern world," adding that "I do believe that the Second Vatican Council is a focal point as we move forward."

Referring to the legacy left by Bl. John Paul II, the archbishop explained that it is his "teaching and witness to the dignity of the human person in the context of the 20th century that is so important."

"If you look back at his first encyclical, *Redemptoris Hominis*, it is in a certain sense the program of his papacy in a capsule form" he noted, drawing attention to the emphasis the pontiff placed on the dignity of human labor and the family.

He also gave a strong "witness to the dignity of the human person," Archbishop Lori stated, affirming that "it's a legacy we need to return to again and again."

Coupled with their presence in Rome, the Knights of Columbus will also be hosting celebrations for the canonizations across the United States, the largest being in Washington D.C., New Haven, Conn., and Los Angeles.

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