

The announcement of a canonization in the Church is always a time for celebration and rejoicing. On September 30, the Pope announced that Blessed John Paul II and Blessed John XXIII will be declared saints on April 27, 2014. This came after a long process of examining each of their lives, and the miracles attributed to them. I admit I didn't know too much about either of them. I remember John Paul II some, but only at the end of his papacy. I've only known about John XXIII in the last year. Nonetheless, one of the coolest things is learning about a saint, especially a saint that we eventually grow close to and have a special fondness for. We find connections and hear their stories which draw us to them. We hear stories that do not seem very saint-like and those that make us wonder how we could ever be saints. What we decipher in the end is a detailed map of how God lead each and every one to Him. They were not born saints but became saints by God's grace.

John Paul II will be remembered as a true missionary of the Gospel, spreading the message of God's love and mercy wherever he went. And he went to many places, becoming the most traveled Pope in history, venturing over 100 times outside of Italy in his 26 year reign from 1978-2005. He greatly emphasized God's mercy and forgiveness. He established the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday, but he also reflected this mercy. He publicly forgave the man who shot him early on in his papacy, and then later visited with him in jail. John Paul II was also a tireless advocate for the dignity of human life and other human rights, in an age when such evils as abortion were first taking storm. He made it an effort to appeal to everyone, especially young people by creating World Youth Day. His accomplishments as Pope could seemingly go on and on. But it is the way that he lived his life as a servant of God that will be remembered.

John XXIII served as Pope from 1958-1963. From what I have read, he was simply a fun man to get to know. He occupied the papacy with a unique sense of humor and wit, combined with a love of life that endeared so many to him. There are many stories of his encounters which enlighten us with the gentle and loving man he was. His most well-known accomplishment was instituting the Second Vatican Council, which called all of the bishops of the world together to evaluate Church doctrine. While no pope had called for Church reform in over four centuries, this did not deter John XXIII. He recognized the need for the Church to be what he called "up to date" with the changing times.

But it is a task to sum up the impact that both these men really had on the Church and the world. I hope we all can take the time to learn more about them in whatever means because these men can assist us so much in the adventure to live out our Catholic faith. We should remember we have a great resource in the John Paul II Shrine, right across the street from O'Boyle Hall. Not only do John XXIII and John Paul II offer their help and companionship, but so do all the saints. They are proof that we can live the life God calls us to. Sometimes we may be turned off by the saints because we think we can't do what they did. Their way of holiness can't possibly be my way of holiness. How can I accomplish such a feat as they? There is a great book to read called "My Life with the Saints," by Father James Martin. He writes that "each saint was holy in his or her unique way, revealing how God celebrates individuality....We're meant to be

ourselves, and meant to allow God to work in and through our own individuality, our own humanity.” So while we celebrate the saints, we also celebrate the differences in saints. They are a manifestation that God can work through anyone.