

Knights Lecture 4 (10/19/2014)

“When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn’t change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn’t change the town and as an older man I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world.”

I’m sure we all have dreams of one day changing the world: whether it’s through some fantastic feat of engineering, conquering the world of politics, or making a scientific discovery that will bring about a new scientific revolution. Examples of people who have changed the world by changing themselves can be found in over the place. One of the most recognizable examples of someone who changed the world in modern times is Karol Wojtyła.

As a young man Karol was a talented linguist and actor. When he saw the effects of communism in his homeland of Poland he decided to enter the seminary, and was ordained a priest at the age of 26. He quickly rose through the ranks of the Church; going from auxiliary bishop, to bishop, to archbishop, to cardinal. He eventually became Pope at the age of 58, taking the name John Paul II. He was the youngest man to be elected to the office in 130 years, and the first non-Italian pope in 455 years.

As Pope he traveled to 129 countries, and became the most viewed person in history, becoming a symbol of faith to the masses on a global. He was instrumental in the fall of the Soviet Union, working closely with Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev, to bring freedom to tear down the Iron Curtain.

These are just a few example of how Saint John Paul the Great changed the world. None of this would be possible if he did not first recognize the need to change himself, which led to him entering seminary, and ended with a list of accomplishments too numerous to count.

If we want to change the world around us we need to understand that people are going to disagree with us, and we are going to make mistakes. Remember this: Although it may seem like everyone is working against us in the beginning, if we believe in one what we are working for, and do not waiver from the path we set for ourselves people will eventually follow. (JP2 was shot by the people he spend a large portion of his life working to defeat, and only gained a stronger following because of it.) To make the most out of a mistake don’t shrug it off simply as a mistake, but use it as an opportunity to learn something you didn’t know before: As Thomas Edison famously said, “I have not failed. I have found 10,000 ways that do not work.”