

Mr. Speaker, we are here to honor the life and legacy of Pope John Paul II, and I am joined by several of our colleagues here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, we often get materials and letters from our constituencies, and sometimes even from other States. Although I represent Arizona, a close friend of mine from California, Kevin Rishell, wrote us a poem today related to Pope John Paul II, and it seemed appropriate to read. So I am going to start with that:

``Pope John Paul II.
A man of simple convictions,
A man of great love and peace;
A father to the nations,
A friend now at last released.
Into the arms of his beloved Savior;
Into history,
With God's tender favor.
`Well done' faithful servant,
Echoes 'cross Heaven's portals;
As John Paul is welcomed,
By friends and other immortals.
His life was a service to God,
And to his neighbors;
To the weak and to the poor,
And dearly loved unbelievers.
For he believed that all life,
Had a godly purpose;
That all life was special,
And that God was never spurious.
For he understood clearly,
The vain rantings of men;
How popular their wisdom,
Seemed to change with the wind.
But he held true to his course,
In the most turbulent times;
With God's Word as his pilot,
And the Holy Spirit as his guide.
In faith, he stood against evil,
When it could have cost him his life;
And for decades and more,
He fought for what was right.
For God was his center,
And Jesus was his friend;
And the Comforter never left him,
From birth to honored end.
For he was on a holy quest,

Of nearly mythic proportions;
A man with a great commission,
Teaching truth and sacred traditions.
He knew where he came from,
And he knew where he would go;
Secure in Christ, adored by the masses,
This humble shepherd-soul.
But now his journey's over,
A final appointment he will keep;
A righteous servant to his Master,
In whose arms he will now rest and sleep.
While leaving a beautiful legacy,
Of honor and valiant grace;
That will live on beyond this tribute,
A priestly mantle so hard to replace.
We will miss you Holy Father,
We will miss your humor and your passion;
We will miss your concern for personal details,
And your courage to speak and to take action.
But now you have fought your good fight,
And you have finished your race;
We thank you for your example,
And pray God bless you for your faith.
Via con Dios, my precious brother,
Go with God my blessed friend;
Shalom to you my loving confessor,
Be at peace and as you always said, `Amen.' "

Mr. Speaker, it is with great admiration and gratitude that I now personally rise to commend to the ages the life of Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II.

Pope John Paul II lived an intentional life. Too often today, we spend our lives in a reactive state, with daily events and crises drowning out the reflection and study which are required to live an intentional life.

The Pope did not fall into this trap of the immediate. He instead considered his life's great questions and, after seeking guidance in Holy Scripture and through prayer, he steadfastly stayed wisdom's course.

Mr. Speaker, by now the narrative of the Pope's life has become well-known. Growing up in Poland, he had firsthand experience with two of the 20th century's most horrible totalitarian creations, that being Nazism and Soviet Communism. Living under these systems as a young man, he saw in detail not only the physical corrosion wrought by these systems of government, but the spiritual and social decay they engendered as well.

He looked beyond the jackboots and the tanks and saw that the real power of these regimes stemmed not from physical force, but from an intellectual climate that was stripping the humanness from humanity. Karol Wojtyla dedicated himself to fighting this evil,

not with force of might, but through prayer, availing his heart, soul and mind unto God, and in serving his fellow human beings.

He exemplified what the Holy Scripture exhorts from man: "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." He sought for justice to be done and the truth to be told by placing a handwritten acknowledgment of Christian sins against the Jewish people in a crevice of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and in his admonishment of the kneeling Father Ernesto Cardenal, the Sandinista Culture Minister in Nicaragua.

He demonstrated mercy, and after recovering from his wounds from the assassination attempt on his life by Mehmet ali Agca, he visited this deranged Turk in prison. He visited him, and then he forgave him.

And he walked humbly, Mr. Speaker, allowing all of us to watch as he deteriorated physically right before our eyes, believing that those who follow Christ, as Christ himself taught, must sometimes endure suffering.

Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II in 1978, and held the Chair of Saint Peter for more than 26 years. At the beginning of his Papacy, the totalitarianism that had colored his youth was on the march throughout the world. Previously free people were being enslaved by Soviet Communism with alarming regularity. However, the Soviet Union had reached its zenith, and soon would crumble, due in large part to the efforts of a triumvirate of courageous and noble leaders: Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and this new Pope, John Paul II.

He chose to attack the intellectual moorings of totalitarianism; thus he could eliminate the power structure that it rested upon.

He opposed abortion, believing innocent human life was sacred and that the casual elimination of the weak is the first step on the path that leads to the enslavement of all. One of the great teaching documents of his pontificate, "Evangelium Vitae," stated: "Life, especially human life, belongs only to God; for this reason, whoever attacks human life in some way attacks God himself."

He opposed liberal theology, firmly believing that a Church which did not stand up for its core doctrines would be unlikely to stand up to evil in the world. And he encouraged us all to do the same, stating that "freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought." And kindly but boldly he encouraged us not to be afraid, stating: "Have no fear of moving into the unknown. Simply step out fearlessly knowing that God is with you, therefore no harm can befall you; all is very, very well. Do this in complete faith and confidence."

He demonstrated this full and complete trust in God, and from his first appearance on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica proclaimed that "Christ, Christ is the answer."

He was a friend of the United States, not out of blind loyalty, but out of a recognition that "radical changes in world politics leave America with a heightened responsibility to be for the world an example of genuinely free, democratic, just and humane society."

And he admonished and cautioned us that it is not enough to speak about freedom, but that freedom must have a purpose, stating: "When freedom does not have a purpose, when it does not wish to know anything about the rule of law engraved in the hearts of men and women, when it does not listen to the voice of conscience, it turns against humanity and society."

Perhaps one of the most fitting tributes to this great man can be found in the news coverage of his death. While the Free World celebrates his legacy and openly mourns his passing, states such as China, which still hold much of their population in the dehumanizing chains of Marxism, do the best to stifle these reports. It seems fitting that the only countries to bar a Papal visit were China, North Korea, Vietnam, and post-Communist Russia.

Those leaders know that John Paul II lived a life in accordance with a view that rejected dehumanizing chains, because man was created to be free, and even though he has passed from this life and into the next, his world view remains, and his courage in the face of death is a powerful symbol of that world view.

The oppressors realize that if their subjects witness this courageous man and embrace his vision of humanity that their days will be numbered. We should all pray that they do.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we should all take great comfort and gain great courage with the Pope's words of hope to all of us. He said, "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song." I am certain that he is right now joined by a multitude of others singing "Hallelujah" to the One he dedicated his life to.