

I EASTER 2014

SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH

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Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli...Karol Jozef Wojtyla...Charles Winfred Douglas...the names of men whose extraordinary gifts have left indelible marks on the Church and its mission to spread the Gospel...the Good News...about Jesus.

We know Angelo Roncalli and Karol Wojtyla as Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II respectively. Today these two men were canonized by the Roman Catholic Church...the first time in history two popes have been canonized on the same day. They will be known by their honorific titles...Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II. Anglican priest Charles Winfred Douglas is a Saint in his own right. Each of these men has through his words and actions gifted the Church with a legacy.

When he was elected in 1958 at age 77, everyone expected John XXIII to be a do-nothing pope. He surprised everyone in his determination to change the outlook of the Roman Catholic Church...he wanted to breathe the new life into the Church through *aggiornamento...bringing things up to date*...when he opened the Second Vatican Council in 1962. He wrote, "I want to open the Church's window so that we may see what is happening outside and so the world may see what is happening within." He visited hospitals and prisons and talked with people...not at them. He was above all concerned about peace in the World. His legacy is his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) completed only two months before he died in 1963. It was addressed to everyone of good will and it was Good News the World needed to hear.

At 58, John Paul II was the youngest pope elected in over 100 years. He was the first non-Italian pope since 1523 and the second longest serving pope. He set about to transform and reposition the Roman Catholic Church at a time of increasing cynicism both within and outside the Church. In his universal call to holiness, he worked "to place the Church at the heart of a new alliance that would bring together Jews, Muslims, and Christians in a great (religious) armada." He believed every human being had a God-given dignity. On his first visit as pope to his native Poland, he knelt and kissed the ground, an event that many see as the beginning of the dismantling of Communism in Europe. He showed great love and respect for the World's youth. His message is his legacy: the Church must evangelize and heal the World.

Canon Charles Winfred Douglas was an Anglican priest and Saint of God. He was a talented and gifted musician whose legacy is the Hymnal 1940 which he edited and which is used in the Anglican Catholic Church today. He was responsible for restoring to the Liturgy the sung parts such as the Merbecke Mass we use during Advent and Lent. He has been called a great pastor and

compassionate leader, "...a Catholic in the complete sense of the word, a member of the Universal Church who was happily at home in all parts of it...he began his career dedicated to the Praise of God...he ended his life with the praise of God on his mind and pen, and in his heart." On the eve of his death, Canon Douglas began composing an organ prelude based on the Advent hymn "Come, Thou Long Expected, Jesus". The following morning Canon Douglas continued working on the prelude and finished it that afternoon. His work complete, Canon Douglas died later that evening.

We spend time talking about Pope John XXIII, Pope John Paul II, Canon Douglas, and others we don't read about in the Bible, because we learn much from them and their work...they were Saints to whom God gave extraordinary gifts to help them spread the Gospel...the Good News...to communicate to everyone in their individual and unique ways...the love of God...the awesome power of the Resurrection...and the Hope for eternal life that comes from the intimate knowledge of God our Father as he has been revealed to us by his Son, Jesus. We learn most from them because they were just like us...Saints of God...certainly with special talents...but tested just like we are. They never stopped telling the Good News...the Good News the author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes is what we wait for with joyful hope and expectation...for that which we have not yet seen...a personal appearance by Jesus and our own resurrections to eternal life.

Let's take time now to thank God for the life and work of Pope John XXIII, Pope John Paul II, and Canon Charles Winfred Douglas, and all of the Saints of God who have died and who dedicated their lives to telling the Good News about Jesus Christ...and for the Saints of God still alive today who never stop telling the Good News to others.

We are Saints of God too...and we each have a gift God has given to us help us do our work...so let us continue to tell others the Good News...today, tomorrow, and the next day...until our work on Earth is complete, and our new life in heaven begins.

