

Dr Geoff Gallop; Mr Matt Birney; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Tom Stephens; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Kobelke;
Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Bob Kucera; Speaker

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Condolence Motion

DR G.I. GALLOP (Victoria Park - Premier) [2.01 pm] - without notice: I move -

That this house record its sincere regret at the death of Pope John Paul II and tender its deep sympathy to all members of the Catholic community on the loss of their spiritual leader.

Pope John Paul II was an extraordinary and influential Christian who helped shape the late twentieth-century world. He was a spiritual inspiration to Catholics all over the world and, like all great religious leaders, he saw that the rampant materialism and consumerism of the rich countries and the poverty and injustice of the Third World undermined the potentiality inherent within the human condition. He was also a political inspiration to oppressed peoples all over the world through his strong belief in religious tolerance, human rights and democracy. We now know the role he played in supporting the Solidarity trade union movement in Poland, which led to the downfall of communism in that country, and the support he gave to human rights and democracy all over the world.

The Pope was also a challenging figure to all people of all faiths with his very strong views on the great philosophical and moral questions that have been asked throughout human history. Whatever one may think about his views - I confess I could not agree with some of his views - the Pope could not be ignored. He was an intellectual and moral force to be reckoned with in our modern world. Very importantly, he expressed his strong opposition to the wars of the past decade. In common with leaders like Nelson Mandela, the Pope affirmed his unswerving conviction that non-violence is humanity's alternative to war. I urge all members of this Parliament to read the Pope's many statements on peace and its connection to both justice and forgiveness.

Throughout his papacy John Paul II reached out to the other faiths in search of reconciliation after centuries of hostility and suspicion. He travelled to Islamic countries and became the first Pope to enter a mosque. He also reached out to the Jewish people, who so often have been the victims of Christian prejudice and intolerance. In 25 years, Pope John Paul II visited almost every corner of the world, redefining the papacy for a modern age. Not many people in our world would not have been touched in some way by the Pope. He may have offered them spiritual inspiration; he may have offered them hope in the oppression that surrounded them; or he may have challenged them in their views. Whatever it was, the Pope touched the lives of almost everyone in the world today.

The Pope came to Western Australia in 1986, and more than 100 000 Western Australians attended mass with him at Belmont Park. Looking back at his papacy, I am confronted by his steadfastness and his undeviating commitment to the principles in which he believed. Yesterday and today we, with millions all over the world, have begun to pay our final respects to Pope John Paul II. I will conclude by reminding everyone of the Pope's insistence that we all have an obligation to contribute to the common good for the wider community.

MR M.J. BIRNEY (Kalgoorlie - Leader of the Opposition) [2.05 pm]: I rise on behalf of the Liberal Party to also offer our condolences to Christians around the world. Pope John Paul II was truly one of the great leaders of our time. We need only reflect on the vision that we have all seen on television in recent times to understand just how many lives Pope John Paul II touched during his reign as Pope. I vividly remember watching the television clips of people who were lined up, probably for kilometres, waiting to get a glimpse of the Pope. That is a true reflection of the measure of this man. Two million people are expected to attend his funeral. That is certainly a vote of support for one of the great leaders of our time. Pope John Paul was the first non-Italian in 455 years to be elected Pope when he became Pope in 1978. He continued to set a number of records when compared with some of his predecessors. He held talks with 1 590 heads of state around the world and appointed some 231 cardinals. Importantly, he travelled more than 1.2 million kilometres for papal visits both inside and outside Italy. I want to stop and reflect for a moment on that point. Over time we saw the Pope's health deteriorate, yet his resolve did not deteriorate. He did everything in his power to bring his message to the people. The 1.2 million kilometres that he travelled in his time as Pope is certainly a reflection of that. Pope John Paul will be remembered as one of the great leaders of our time. Catholics and other Christians from around the world are obviously deeply disappointed in his passing. I am pleased to offer our condolences to all Christians and Catholics around the world and to all others who followed the Pope's reign.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [2.07 pm]: I support the motion on behalf of my National Party colleagues. Like many other people, we are saddened by the loss of this courageous man. It struck me when reading about the Pope in the past few days that many people reflected on his youth in Poland and the circumstances of communism in central Europe. It is interesting that on the death of a substantial leader such as the Pope, who held that position for 26 years, people reflect on his origins and on his youth. Pope John Paul II was, without doubt, a visionary. He is acknowledged as one of the greatest religious leaders of modern

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times. As politicians and community leaders we should all take inspiration from this humble and single-minded man whose papacy lasted 26 years. As several speakers have already said, he travelled the world in that time. When the Pope came to Western Australia in 1986 I was a member of this chamber, and I was pleased to give up my seat at events to two very devout Catholics from my electorate. That was not because I did not want to see a great man, but because I knew it would mean more to those people. I remember that time very well, because Western Australians flocked to see the Pope on that occasion. It also should be noted that it is not just Catholics who are now turning up in Rome. I refer to not only leaders but also individuals. A range of people of different beliefs are turning up to show their respect for a very significant man. He has been described, and quite rightly, as a builder of freedom. As has already been stated, he was the first non-Italian head of the Catholic Church for hundreds of years. He held a conservative line when the organisation was struggling with defections to the modern world. That was the issue the Premier spoke about. Over the past 20 years there have been many strident issues on which he held a consistent line, and we must admire him for that stand.

Pope John Paul stood for a God-centred approach to the church, and he fearlessly reached out to the common person, wherever that person may have been, urging peace, harmony, forgiveness, tolerance and hope - all substantial messages. He travelled the globe tirelessly, including to the Holy Land, spelling out his consistent message to build a better world. He was the first Pope to enter a mosque. In 1981 he barely escaped death from an assassin's bullet in St Peter's Square in Rome. It was a measure of the man that he visited the would-be Turkish assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca, in his prison cell and forgave him. That is a measure of the individual.

His passing at age 84, which is a pretty good innings, ends a very remarkable life for a boy whose origins were that of a poor family in Cracow, Poland. We will remember him.

MR T.G. STEPHENS (Central Kimberley-Pilbara) [2.10 pm]: I rise to be associated with the motion that has been moved by the Premier and spoken to by two other members of the house. The opportunity to express a sense of loss at the death of His Holiness Pope John Paul II is one that is not to be missed by people such as those in the Australian Catholic community who have been able to share the period in which he led the church and the world through some extraordinary periods of our recent past. In my case, I was lucky enough to have had a private audience with Pope John Paul II in his apartments in the Vatican back in May 1989. It was the opportunity to speak with him directly because of his imminent visit to East Timor, which was to follow within a couple of weeks, and to see the agility of the man's mind, his complete comprehension of the circumstances into which he was walking and his interest in the perspective of someone who was a near neighbour but who had gone to Rome from Broome and had long maintained an interest in East Timor. He was quick to jump on that interest, to explore it and to talk about it in that encounter, which was captured in a beautiful photograph that I treasure.

John Paul II was a man who, from his experience of the simple story of the Christian gospels, advocated freedom, which led him into extraordinary challenges in his papacy. It was an advocacy that was not restricted simply to freedom by itself, but to the consistent respect for the life ethic. It was one that led him to oppose war stridently, no matter where it occurred. The advocates of war found him an implacable opponent. Consistent with his life ethic, he opposed euthanasia, capital punishment and abortion, and he called upon the people across the globe to show respect for that life-giving principle of respect for life and what it means for humanity.

He was more than a man who talked about tolerance; he was a man who talked about reconciliation between the peoples and the faiths of the world. This was a very deep-seated conviction that had been shaped by his own experience of the lack of tolerance within Europe that had seen his own nation first suppressed by the Nazis and then humiliated by the conquering forces of the Soviet bloc. He was shaped by that experience into someone with extraordinary resilience, which was on display throughout his papacy. His strength of character could be seen. Some would say that, in the internal discipline of the church, his strengths brought with them some weaknesses as well. However, today is the time to remember the strengths, and this man of extraordinary strength, as he lived out the weeks and months of his old age, has delivered an extraordinary example to all of us in the face of that human challenge that comes at the end of our lives. With the role model he has delivered to humanity, it will be difficult to imagine a papacy that will bring such a combination of intellect, personality and absolute conviction in one person. I express sympathy for the sadness that so many of us share at this time.

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.15 pm]: As a proud Roman Catholic, I am happy to personally support the condolence motion for His Holiness Pope John Paul II and also to make the observation that we should be celebrating the life of this remarkable man. He was born Karol Jozef Wojtyla, in very poor circumstances, on 18 May 1920, in Wadowice, Poland. His mother died when he was nine years old, and his father when he was 21. As members would have read, Karol and his father tried to evade the invading German army in the Second World War. They found, when they had travelled 190 kilometres in one direction, that they had to traverse back another 190 kilometres because the Russians were approaching. As a young man, he worked in a chemical factory, and at shovelling limestone in a quarry. He then studied theology

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and, at the age of 26, on All Saints Day, 1946, he was ordained a Catholic priest. He took up his curacy in the shadows of the Carpathian mountains, at a place where there was no electricity or running water. He baptised and taught children, and performed weddings. He was appointed an auxiliary bishop by Pope Pius XII in 1958, and became archbishop of Krakow in 1964. He was made a cardinal in 1967. On 16 October 1978, he was elected the first non-Italian Pope in 455 years.

He was a remarkable man. He survived a shooting by a Turk, and an attempted stabbing by a rebel Spanish priest. He had an intestinal tumour, a broken leg and a broken shoulder. Some of the images members have seen of his recent illness seemed to be played out a little too much. He has been described by world leaders as a beacon of light, a visionary committed to God's service, and bestowed with other accolades. His views on moral issues, in particular, influenced people throughout the world and, as was mentioned by a previous speaker, his comments on abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriages, marriage for Catholic priests and so on, have dominated the theological scene across the world.

When I have picked up the paper in the past couple of days, I have been quite heartened. After seeing the images of an ailing Pope, whose mind was obviously still very alert and clear, I saw photos like the one I am showing the house now from *The Australian*. It is a magnificent photograph of a vibrant man, obviously respected by people throughout the world. I am pleased to see that those images were published by a number of media outlets around the world. Although this is a sad day, Pope John Paul II has had a major influence on world history and politics, and on churches throughout the world. I am sure that people everywhere will have his image in their minds. I am pleased to support this condolence motion.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta - Leader of the House) [2.20 pm]: Pope John Paul II was much loved and respected as the head of the Catholic Church. His influence on the church was very strong, but that influence went well beyond the Catholic Church. As has already been said, he was the first non-Italian Pope in well over 400 years and that brought a new energy and a new tone to the papacy. In addition to being the Bishop of Rome, he was seen to have brought something very new to the position of Pope. Although he was steadfast in preserving the traditional teachings of the church, he reached out to peoples right across the world, and he seemed to build a rapport that stretched well beyond the members of the Catholic Church. He travelled more than any other Pope in history, making official visits to various countries on well over 100 occasions. John Paul II exerted religious and moral leadership beyond his role as head of the Catholic Church. Many outside the Catholic faith admired him for his personal integrity, his understanding and the holiness of the life he led. His fortitude and devotion to duty have been evidenced in how he continued in that leadership role while suffering from Parkinson's disease and other ailments. John Paul II was a strong advocate for peace, a cause he took up in various trouble spots around the world. His contribution to the church and to world affairs leaves a legacy that will live on long after he has passed us and gone to his just reward.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [2.21 pm]: John Paul II was not just a spiritual leader to the world's one billion Catholics, and the world's most prominent Christian; he was also, I believe, the world's most significant and enduring world leader of the past quarter of a century. As has already been mentioned, he was born into very humble circumstances; yet, despite the many high positions he achieved within the Catholic Church and his great intellect, he never forgot his beginnings and always maintained the strongest of sympathies for workers, the underprivileged and the oppressed. He was a champion of human rights on the world stage, promoting justice, peace and freedom. He was a truly remarkable Pope, who lived in a remarkable era. He travelled the world more widely and more frequently than any previous Pope, promoting peace and Christianity. His courage in articulating his position was never better illustrated than when he told President George W. Bush that "God is not on your side if you invade Iraq". Catholics worldwide are grateful for the life of John Paul II and, although we mourn his passing, we know that he has now been born into eternal life.

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Disability Services) [2.22 pm]: I rise to say just a few words in this condolence motion. Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II, had a profound effect on the life of my family. My father, Karel, was a devout, practising Catholic whose family suffered under the Nazi regime in Czechoslovakia. Karel fled his country to join the free Czech air force in the United Kingdom and fight fascism, whilst Karol Wojtyla, through his faith, resisted totalitarianism in his beloved Poland as the wings of darkness spread across Europe. After the war my father, Karel, returned to Czechoslovakia. This was done by countless men and women from Poland, Czechoslovakia and all the Baltic states as they tried to restart their shattered lives in the hope that their new families would join them. Their faith was the bastion that supported them and the love of their countries drove them onward, only to be confronted by the imposition of yet another totalitarian regime as the Iron Curtain descended. Whilst Pope John Paul built the foundation of faith in post-war Poland, my father kept the faith in a small Welsh mining town. He was a devout and committed follower who never lost the love for his country. His one fervent belief was that Catholicism would overcome communism, even after the tanks

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rolled into Prague and the first glimmerings of democracy in Poland were initially and savagely suppressed. I remember the many times I sat with him at mass as he prayed for this particular outcome.

When Pope John Paul became the Bishop of Rome, my father, Karel, rejoiced. We had by then started a new life in Australia. In that same year, with my sister Janet, he visited his remaining family in Czechoslovakia and returned with the prediction and the profound faith that the collapse of communism was imminent. How right he was. There is no doubt that history will now show that this Polish Pope was the catalyst who toppled the first domino in Eastern Europe. History will also show that the leadership of Pope John Paul II nurtured that underlying faith that people have in their quest for freedom and democracy in almost every nation in this world.

My father lived to see his homeland once again become the proud democracy that it was in his childhood. I remember when he stood for hours in 1986 waiting to see Pope John Paul on his visit to Perth. I was very proud to see my children, his grandchildren, stand alongside him.

Although we are all entitled to our views on morals, religion and questions of faith, I will be forever grateful for the gift of freedom that John Paul II gave to so many of the Karel Kuceras of this world simply by maintaining the everlasting belief in the dignity of humankind. May he rest in peace in the eternal keeping of the Almighty.

The SPEAKER: I ask members to rise and support this motion by observing a minute's silence.

Question passed, members standing.