

MEMORIAL WORDS FOR POPE JOHN PAUL II
By Scotty McLennan, Dean for Religious Life
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As Dean for Religious Life at Stanford, I join the Catholic Community in mourning an extraordinary spiritual leader in Pope John Paul II. More than any other pope in history, he reached out to people of other religious traditions, and he tirelessly traveled the world in a continuous attempt to bring us together globally in a common commitment to peace and justice. If we here at Stanford are primarily engaged in education for global citizenship, as I deeply believe we are, Pope John Paul II was a quintessential model of the global citizen.

I'll never forget his coming to Boston in 1979 less than a year after he had been named to the papacy. Originally from a well-to-do suburban background, I was then living in a low-income neighborhood of the city, involved in providing free legal services to the poor -- law being my other career besides the ministry. His motorcade came right up the street next to mine, and I was out there with thousands of other people, deeply appreciating his physical and spiritual presence in one of the most depressed areas of Boston. Later that day he gave an incredibly moving sermon on the packed Boston Common. It was about the parable of the young rich man not being able to give up his wealth to follow Jesus. I found myself weeping uncontrollably, my tears mixing with the rain, as I thought about how much I'd been given in life and how little I'd given back.

In later years I was amazed by this Pope again and again, even as there were things he said and did with which I personally disagreed and lamented. He apologized in an unprecedented way for the sins of the church over the last 2,000 years, describing intolerance and injustices against Jews, women, indigenous peoples, immigrants and the poor. He courageously condemned human rights violations as he traveled around the world. He had a moral consistency -- respecting the inherent worth and dignity of each individual -- which led him to challenge the materialism of capitalism just as surely as the failed collectivism of communism. Likewise, he had a consistent ethic of life, which meant that even as he denounced abortion and euthanasia, he also vigorously opposed capital punishment and the war in Iraq.

Here on a college campus, it's also important to note that he had a spiritual presence and an understanding that attracted young people in staggering numbers, all around the world. He was always concerned about the future of this planet earth, and therefore saw high school and college students as a primary audience. Let's never forget the man who went to Japan and exclaimed, "To remember Hiroshima is to abhor nuclear war. To remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace" ...the man who went to Auschwitz and asked, "How far can cruelty go?" At a university whose founding purpose was "to promote the public welfare by exercising an influence in behalf of humanity and civilization", may each of us always remember this man John Paul II whose spiritual and practical commitment to world peace and justice was always unstinting.