

Students in Bolton celebrate Pope John Paul II's sainthood

By Angela Gismondi

Pope John Paul II Catholic Elementary School in Bolton celebrated the canonization of the man after whom the school was named last Tuesday.

History was made last Sunday when two 20th-century popes became saints in the same ceremony. Pope Francis announced the canonization of John Paul II and John XXIII and invited retired Pope Benedict XVI to join him on the altar of St. Peter's Square in Vatican City in Italy. It was the first time a reigning and a retired pope have celebrated mass together in public in the 2,000-year history of the church.

John Paul II was Pope from October 1978 until his death in April 2005 at the age of 84. He was the second longest-serving pope in modern history and the first non-Italian since Pope Adrian VI, who died in 1523.

The Pope John Paul II school community marked the historic occasion with a liturgy in celebration of the canonization of John Paul. In order to accommodate the entire school, as well as family and friends, the celebration was held at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School.

Bishop John Boissonneau led the liturgy with Father Larry Leger of Holy Family Church Bolton. Deacon Robert Suthers, Father Jim Roth, priest in residence at the Catholic Education Centre in Mississauga, and school superintendent Les Storey also attended the celebration.

"I am grateful for the many years St. Pope John Paul II served as our pope and for his preaching, teaching, faithfulness and for the many trips throughout the world to celebrate the good news," said Boissonneau. "Now your school is named for a saint . . . are you ever lucky to belong to Pope John Paul II School?"

Boissonneau shared an important connection he has to Saint John Paul II. Along with meeting him four times, the Pope asked him to be a bishop.

"Pope John Paul II asked me to accept his call to be a bishop," he said. "I had a saint ask me to be a bishop."

Leger said the lanterns and flowers which were placed around the sacred space honouring the pontiff at the celebration are symbolic. "Saint John Paul II, as he visited many different places, he called people to holiness," said Leger. "He reminded people that holiness is what all of us - every single one of us - is called to do. It's not something that happens with the snap of a finger. It takes time to grow. But even if it's tough, let's remember his words 'be not afraid,' a reminder that each of us is called to grow in holiness."

George Consitt, principal of Pope John Paul II, said the celebration was important to recognize the canonization, but even more important is what the students learned about Pope John Paul II.

"It was wonderful to have a celebration but as we began to plan for the celebration, it was good for all our staff and all the students to begin to think of who he was and why he would be chosen for sainthood," said Consitt. "I really wanted them to carry with them a knowledge about who he was. Everybody in the school takes great pride in the man that the school was named after and is now recognized by the church and declared by Pope Francis as being a saint."



Students from Pope John Paul II Elementary School in Bolton celebrated the canonization of the man after which their school was named last Tuesday with a liturgy at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School. Students carried flowers and lanterns and placed them in front of a sacred space created to celebrate the newly-named saint. Photos by Angela Gismondi



Father Larry Leger, Deacon Robert Suthers, Bishop John Boissonneau and Father Jim Ross presided over the special service.