

Pope John Traveled In Our Hearts . . .

We had had so many audiences with Pope Pius XII . . . whom we so esteemed and loved . . . that this new Pope John seemed an "impossible substitute" when we entered our first audience with him on the way to the Eucharistic Congress in Munich, in 1958. WHO could take the place of Pius XII? No one! we thought. And we a little resented the fact that in the course of history someone had to try.

But after that first audience . . . we knew that this new Pope did not have to try to fill the shoes of the great Pius. He just had to be himself.

"You are going to the Congress to honor Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist," he said. "How I long to go with you! But since I cannot . . . won't you carry me along in your hearts?"

We did . . . and soon the whole world carried him in its heart. No Pope within our memory has been so mourned by so many.

The last audience we had with him was a special one in Saint Peter's for the crippled children of Rome a few weeks before he died. I got very close to him and thought he looked fine. But just the night before I had had dinner with Count Fani Ciotti, a General of the Papal Guard. The Count had told me the Holy Father had cancer.

I remembered that a group I had conducted to an audience last Fall was deeply touched when, at the end of the audience, Pope John said: "I give my blessing to you, and to all your dear ones. And when you go home to your dear ones and especially to the children and to anyone who is ill or suffering . . . give them a little blow on the cheek (and the

by
JOHN
HAFFERT



Pope John was the first Pope in a century to travel. From the moment he proclaimed the Ecumenical Council he decided to go to the Holy House of Nazareth, in Loreto, to pray for the Council . . . and four years later . . . just one week before the Council convened . . . he went. Here he kneels in the Holy House gazing at the replica of the very old statue that was venerated in the Holy House for hundreds of years. He might indeed be called the "Patron Pope of Pilgrimages".

kindly Pope gestured with a tapping wave) and say: 'Pope John sent you that'."

I remember so much that I could write pages. But so many others have written of him . . . and so much better than I might write. But perhaps there is one thing I might write . . . unknown to most:

He Will Do More

Not long before he died, Pope Pius XII was walking on the ramparts of Castel Gandolfo with Father Walter Miller, S.J., an assistant Papal Astronomer. And thinking of the greatness of Pope Pius . . . with his many languages, his sanctity, his wisdom and learning and statesmanship and the reverence in which he was held by the world . . . Father Miller suddenly said:

"Your Holiness, I would not want to be the one who would have to step into your shoes."

Pope Pius XII immediately stopped walking. He turned to Father Miller, and said deliberately:

"The man who follows me will be greater, and will do more than I."

When Cardinal Roncalli walked

out on that balcony of Saint Peter's after the elections five years ago, I doubted my Papal idol, Pius XII, for the first time. But then I reasoned that Pope Pius XII was a saint and that for humility's sake God permitted his mind to be obscured in making this prophecy.

But, in a way, Pope John XXIII, so completely different from Pope Pius XII . . . did not only MORE, but perhaps more than any Pope in such a short reign for *centuries*.

We end up all such reminiscences by happily realizing that these holy Popes are even more alive now, in Heaven, than they were during their reigns. And we ask them to join with us in thanking the all-good God for blessing the Church and the world in this century, with a whole succession of such wonderful, wonderful Popes.

Blessed be God . . . in the wonder and diversity of His Saints!

And especially blessed are we pilgrims who saw these Popes . . . and still hear the echo of their blessing upon us.

May pilgrims to Rome, in the years to come, be equally blessed!