

WISDOM FROM  
POPE PAUL VI





# WISDOM FROM POPE PAUL VI

Compiled by  
Mary Leonora Wilson, FSP



Library of Congress Control Number: 2018948419

CIP Data is available.

ISBN 10: 0-8198-8377-8

ISBN 13: 978-0-8198-8377-3

Excerpts from Pope Paul VI's magisterium texts copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1993, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Rosana Usselmann

Cover art by Amedeo Brogli

Introduction, A Brief Biography, and prayers following the meditations written by Mary Leonora Wilson, FSP

Selected Prayers of Pope Paul VI translated by Mary Leonora Wilson, FSP

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

“P” and PAULINE are registered trademarks of the Daughters of St. Paul.

Copyright © 2018, Daughters of St. Paul

---

Published by Pauline Books & Media, 50 Saint Paul's Avenue, Boston, MA 02130-3491

Printed in the U.S.A.

[www.pauline.org](http://www.pauline.org)

Pauline Books & Media is the publishing house of the Daughters of St. Paul, an international congregation of women religious serving the Church with the communications media.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

22 21 20 19 18

# CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . .	1
A Brief Biography . . . . .	5
Faith . . . . .	21
<i>Life Is You, O God!</i> . . . . .	23
<i>Don't Be Afraid</i> . . . . .	26
<i>Believe in Christ</i> . . . . .	28
<i>Immersed in God</i> . . . . .	30
Love . . . . .	33
<i>God Loves Us!</i> . . . . .	35
<i>God IS Love</i> . . . . .	37
<i>Respond to Divine Love</i> . . . . .	40
<i>Love Is the Art of Peace</i> . . . . .	42
Eucharist . . . . .	45
<i>Mystery of Love</i> . . . . .	47
<i>Extraordinary Bread</i> . . . . .	49
<i>Real Presence</i> . . . . .	52
<i>Mystery of Faith</i> . . . . .	54

Mary, Our Mother . . . . .	57
<i>Devotion to Mary</i> . . . . .	59
<i>Look to Mary</i> . . . . .	61
<i>Mother of Christ</i> . . . . .	63
<i>The Rosary</i> . . . . .	65
Prayer . . . . .	67
<i>Inner Silence</i> . . . . .	68
<i>Need of Prayer</i> . . . . .	70
<i>Jesus Prays</i> . . . . .	73
<i>Personal Prayer</i> . . . . .	75
Joy . . . . .	77
<i>God Is Our Happiness</i> . . . . .	79
<i>Serene in Christ</i> . . . . .	81
<i>Easter Joy</i> . . . . .	83
<i>Joy in the Church</i> . . . . .	85
Courage . . . . .	87
<i>Christianity Is Demanding</i> . . . . .	89
<i>Live by Hope</i> . . . . .	91
<i>The Christian Lifestyle</i> . . . . .	94
<i>Christ Is for Us</i> . . . . .	96
Evangelization . . . . .	99
<i>We Have Good News!</i> . . . . .	101
<i>God's Great Plan</i> . . . . .	103

<i>Epiphany Proclamation</i> . . . . .	105
<i>Now Is the Time</i> . . . . .	107
Selected Prayers . . . . .	109



# INTRODUCTION

“What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.”

MT 11:9

What Jesus said to the crowds about John the Baptist rings true twenty centuries later about another who would bear the Italian equivalent of that name: Giovanni Battista Montini. The Latins have an expression, *Nomen est omen*, which means “The name is a sign.” No wonder that Giovanni Battista Montini, the man we now know as Pope Paul VI, is both a prophet and a saint!

I was thrilled when I heard that Pope Paul VI was going to be canonized; he has been a mentor and model to me for more than fifty years. This mentoring started—even though I wasn’t aware of it—when I was just a teenager. I entered the congregation of the Daughters of Saint Paul on June 29, 1963, the same day that Pope Paul VI was crowned. The coronation ceremony was fascinating, but foreign to me. It was like opening a time capsule. Little did I know, I was witnessing the

elaborate ceremony for the last time. The coronation was just one of the many trappings of aristocracy that would be removed, prompted by subsequent decisions of Pope Paul VI to simplify the papacy and render it more evangelical.

Paul VI had been elected pope eight days before, thus my entrance into religious life was ushered in with a new Pope. I joined a community whose mission is to use every means of communication available to proclaim Christ from the rooftops and on all the streets and byways of the world—the very mission of the first apostles and disciples! I was filled with the enthusiasm of youth. Every day of convent life was new and exciting, and I had fallen in love with Jesus Christ and his Church. Unconsciously, I was looking for people who could direct me always closer to the Lord. I had no idea that the newly elected pontiff would be one of those people.

Just months after his coronation, Pope Paul VI reconvened the Second Vatican Council. I wasn't yet familiar with Church councils, but in community we followed every session and read every document as it was issued. Not only that, we also published them for everyone else to read. As a community, we subscribed to the weekly English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper. We read some articles aloud together, especially the words of the Holy Father. I began to look forward to them even though the ecclesiastical language and sentence structure challenged me. The words of the pope struck a chord in my soul.

In those early days I was especially impressed with his love for Christ and the Church, his insistence on dialogue and ecumenism, his concern about rampant injustice and escalating violence in the world, and his unwavering serenity and gentleness despite harsh public criticism. I was particularly touched by his compassion, fired by his missionary vision, and awed by the way he embraced and carried the Cross of Christ. Pope Paul VI stoked the fire of my own love of Christ. More by his life than by his words, he taught me what it means to be a disciple of the Master. His weekly addresses illuminated my theology studies, and as I studied Scripture I began to recognize that he was indeed a contemporary prophet. He became “my pope.”

In the following pages, you will find some of the most moving passages from Pope Paul VI. Each selection ends with a brief prayer to serve as a springboard for your own prayer and reflection. In Pope Saint Paul VI, may you discover a spiritual friend and mentor for your own journey with the Lord, just as I did so many years ago.

MARY LEONORA WILSON, FSP



# A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

## *Battista Montini*

Pope Saint Paul VI was born on September 26, 1897, at Concesio, near Brescia, in the Lombardy region of northern Italy. He was baptized on September 30 and given the name Giovanni Battista Montini—actually, Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini!

Battista was the second son of Giorgio Montini and Giuditta Alghisi. His father was a non-practicing lawyer and landowner, the editor of the local Catholic newspaper, and a parliamentary deputy. Battista's mother, although orphaned as a child, was from a noble family and schooled in a French-speaking convent in Milan. She would become the leader of the Catholic Women of Brescia. Battista was one of three children, all boys. His older brother, Lodovico, was born just one year before, and his younger brother, Francesco, three years after.

In 1903, at the age of six, Battista began to attend a Jesuit school. The Montini boys were steered in the family tradition

of medicine and public service, but Battista dreamed of becoming a writer. Because literature was encouraged in the Montini household, Battista was familiar with all the great European classics. He was also greatly influenced by his father's editorial work.

Battista became a passionate bicyclist, but as he grew into a teenager he recognized he would never be a sportsman. One day, while cycling with his brother Lodovico, he suffered what appeared to be a stroke and was diagnosed as a "serious cardiac imbalance." Heart problems remained with him for the rest of his life, making any strenuous exercise unthinkable.

In fact, when Battista was seventeen years old, he had to leave his Jesuit school and finish his studies privately because of his health. This also meant leaving his best friend, Andrea Trebeschi. The parting was difficult. Andrea invited Battista to write a page in his diary. In that entry Battista expressed his desire to become a priest.

While his desire was not a total surprise, neither was it expected. Although Battista was Jesuit educated, spiritually he was very much influenced by the Oratorians, who ran his home parish: Sant'Antonio de la Pace. He was attracted by their freedom of spirit. The pastor, Father Giulio Bevilacqua, was a lifelong friend and mentor; and the assistant pastor, Father Paolo Caresana, became his confessor and spiritual director from the time Battista was a teenager until the priest died in 1973.

### *From the Priesthood . . .*

As he pondered and prayed over his vocation, Battista's first desire was to become a Benedictine monk. But the monks dissuaded him because he didn't have the health to cope with the demands of monastic life. It was a huge disappointment for Battista. He continued to wrestle with his vocation, trying to understand where God was calling him. He decided to be a diocesan priest. In 1915 Italy entered World War I. Battista was rejected for military service because of his health.

A year later he was accepted into the seminary, only to find out that there would be only two seminarians instead of five because every other candidate had been conscripted! Thus, Battista became an "external student," living and studying at home while attending twenty lectures per week. Classes were held in the monastery of the Church of the Most Holy Body of Christ in Brescia, since the seminary building was being used as a warehouse for a military hospital. In those lonely and confusing years, his spiritual director, Father Caresana, helped him see his way through. "His fatherhood was my seminary," Battista would later attest.

The war ended on November 11, 1918. Post-war reconstruction began and Battista's preparation for the priesthood intensified. He was ordained on May 29, 1920, at the age of twenty-two. The white chasuble he wore was made from his mother's wedding dress.

Once again, health was a deciding factor for Montini's future. His bishop, unwilling to "ordain him for paradise," decided not to risk his precarious health in a country parish, but sent him to Rome to study for a doctorate in history.

### *... To the Vatican*

As the saying goes, "Man proposes but God disposes." After barely one year at the Lombardy college of Rome, Father Montini was summoned by Bishop Pizzardo who told him that he was to enter the Academy for Noble Ecclesiastics, the school for Vatican diplomats. Father Montini was not terribly happy. He neither sought nor wanted a diplomatic career. He felt trapped. The canonical approach to life was not his, but he turned his mind from philosophy, history, and literature to study canon law with the Jesuits at the Gregorian. He had the heart of a monk and mistrusted the academy, where so many students took a path of ambition and honors. But the wheels of destiny had begun to turn and would not be stopped. God himself was conducting the train that would take Father Montini to the halls of the Vatican.

On January 22, 1922, Pope Benedict XV died. Two weeks later, on February 6, Pope Pius XI was elected.

All was not well in Italy. Mussolini was preparing to march on Rome. The Church's main task was to cope with the fascist regime during that dangerous time. Bishop Pizzardo sent the young Father Montini to Milan to finish his studies "as soon

as possible.” In December 1922 he was awarded his doctorate and sent back in Rome, where another surprise awaited him: Father Battista Montini was to enter the service of the Secretariat of State.

After a four-month stint working for the papal nuncio in Poland, at the age of twenty-six he began his Roman apprenticeship in the Secretariat. He spent the next thirty-two years of his life there. The Holy Father named him chaplain to the Catholic students of Rome. In the morning he dealt with issues between the Vatican and the Italian government; in the afternoon he sought to deepen the spiritual, intellectual, and liturgical life of his students.

Father Montini’s work with the students made him especially hated by members of the fascist party. In 1925, all political parties had been dissolved—except the fascists. Under fascist rule, all democratic associations were outlawed, people were arrested and deported without trial, and Catholic students were being brutally assaulted by fascist gangs. At this time Father Montini was in charge of the Catholic student movement throughout the entire country, putting him in the front line of battle as the leader of the intellectual opposition. Mussolini denounced Father Montini to Pope Pius XI for allowing lay groups such as Catholic Action\* to be used for

---

\* Founded in Europe in 1867 and still active today, Catholic Action is an association of Catholics that strives to uphold and defend Christian values inspired by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

political ends. The regime methodically broke up student congresses, banned the newspaper edited by Montini's father and destroyed the presses.

Father Montini did not back down. He founded *La Sapienza*, a weekly newspaper to develop a militantly Catholic intellectual elite and personally contributed many articles to it. With a friend he founded a small publishing house named *Studium* that put out a monthly intellectual review of the same name. Montini was the editor and chief contributor.

Attacks on Catholic Action intensified. In the spring of 1931 all Catholic congresses were canceled, all Catholic youth movements dissolved, properties confiscated, and members violently attacked. Public meetings were permanently suspended, forcing the organization to go underground.

It has been reported that when Mussolini visited the Vatican in 1932, he let the pope know that relations between Italy and the Holy See would improve only if Montini were forbidden contact with student groups. Without warning, Father Montini was thanked and dismissed from his post as national chaplain of the Catholic Students. He had been sacrificed to placate the storm. He submitted, accepting it as the Divine Will. But Father Battista Montini was a creative thinker. "Learning—for life" was his motto. Granted, it was a moment of crisis, but he would not waste time brooding. Later that year, he collaborated in founding a new movement of university graduates, the *Movimento Laureati Cattolici*. It would become instrumental in the formation of those who

would eventually lead the Christian Democratic Party after the collapse of fascism.

At this time Father Montini was appointed the assistant to Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the then Secretary of State, soon to be elected Pope.

### *In a World at War*

Europe was bracing for a second World War. Mussolini and Hitler became allies. As tension mounted Pope Pius XI died, and on March 2, 1939, white smoke signaled a new pontiff—Pope Pius XII.

On September 1 of the same year, Germany invaded Poland and the Second World War began. During the war Pope Pius XII entrusted Father Montini with the organization and direction of the Holy See's relief work. Father Montini hid political refugees and Jews in convents, seminaries, schools, and parishes, helping them with means of escape. In 1944 alone, he organized the distribution of almost two million portions of free food. The Papal Residence of Castel Gandolfo and Vatican City were open to refugees. Father Montini's efforts saved an estimated 860,000 people. Protection was also provided to hundreds of Allied soldiers who had escaped from Axis prison camps. At the pope's request Montini created an information office researching the whereabouts of POW's and refugees. From 1939–1947 the office received almost ten million requests and sent out eleven million replies.