

## A Tribute to a Man

Written after the death of Pope John XXIII,  
whom I had the honor of hearing say Mass  
in June 1962 at St. Peter's Basilica, Rome.

by Tryg Sletteland, June 1963

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To me the Pope was hope. He was the sole shining ray of light in a dark world dominated by the threat of total destruction. But most of all, he was a man. He was a man of the people, a man whose simple humility deeply impressed Catholics and non-Catholics alike. I first saw Pope John saying Mass at St. Peter's during my European trip in the summer of 1962--this was his last summer and perhaps mine, too.

From this experience I derive my special love for the Pope. I attended his Mass with two Jewish girls who, not sharing my faith, considered him to be just another man. But after Mass was over, and after he had bestowed his blessing on the thousands gathered inside the basilica and outside in the square, something happened which made me wonder as to the beautiful, hope-inspiring presence of the Holy Father. It was <sup>as</sup> if his ray of light penetrated the souls of all who saw him, for after it was all over, Carol, one of the Jewish girls with me, remarked, " I can't explain why, but just looking at him gave me a wonderful feeling deep down inside. "

Before leaving Rome, I cast my coin into Trevi Fountain, an action indicating a wish to return to Rome. This was true, but I also wished to see The Pope again. I never did. He died the following spring. But he will be remembered, if not by everyone, at least by Carol and me.