For Immediate Release

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Archbishop Alex J. Brunett says Pope John Paul’s legacy calls world to unity, emphasizes social justice
Archbishop urges world to celebrate pope’s life

(Seattle) Seattle Archbishop Alex J. Brunett today said he joined the world in prayers and mourning for Pope John Paul II whose legacy is one of unity among all religions, cultures and people. Archbishop Brunett asked those who mourn to also celebrate the life of the pope who worked to promote a “culture of life” throughout his papacy.

“Pope John Paul II was truly the pastor of the world’s church and his passing is certainly cause for worldwide mourning,” Archbishop Brunett said. “But it also is an opportunity to celebrate his extraordinary life. As a church, we are grateful for Pope John Paul and his gift of service. We remember his deep love for people and the way he brought them into unity through his respect for different cultures.

“Pope John Paul II wanted the third Christian millennium to be an era of reunion. His actions and many of his writings placed his papal ministry in the service of love to all humanity. He will be remembered especially as the strongest and most persistent advocate of the past century for the poor, the weak and the voiceless,” Archbishop Brunett said.

Archbishop Brunett pointed to several diplomatic missions by Pope John Paul II as examples of his efforts to unify people and religions:

• The pope traveled to Romania and met with the Patriarch Teoctist in 1999 and ushered in a new dialogue with Eastern Orthodox Christians.
• The Pope traveled to Israel and visited the Holocaust memorial at Yad Vashem and placed an apology for Christian mistreatment of Jews in the Wailing Wall while visiting Jerusalem. During that visit he became the first modern Pontiff to go into a Jewish Synagogue.
• Pope John Paul followed up this gesture of interreligious unity and friendship by traveling to Syria in May of 2001 and visiting the Omayyad Mosque in Damascus. During his pontificate John Paul II met with Muslims more than 50 times.

Archbishop Brunett, who has visited with the pope on more than 10 separate occasions, also said Pope John Paul II had been the most persistent world leader calling for social justice for the poor over the past 25 years.

“No one in our lifetime has done more to promote the dignity of people and the cause of justice for the poor and marginalized than Pope John Paul. As a priest and pastor to the world, the Pope championed social justice, human rights and persistently defended religious liberty and freedom of speech.

“Based on the fundamental Catholic belief in the innate dignity of all life, the Pope promoted a wide range of issues that fostered a “culture of life” extending from the unborn to the elderly, from poverty and war to economic and social justice for all the vulnerable and marginalized within the human family. Under his pontificate, exercising a preferential option for the poor became an international priority for the Catholic Church.”

Archbishop Brunett will celebrate a memorial Mass for Pope John Paul II at St. James Cathedral, Seattle as soon as practical for attendance by the greatest number of Catholic people. Details will follow.

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