

“Be Not Afraid”

“Be not afraid!” Saint John Paul II proclaimed these words during his papacy. He stood up for his Christian faith, and he spoke the truth of the love and life of Christ. His papal motto was “Totus tuus,” which means I am entirely yours, Mary. Both Pope John Paul II and I share the same birthday on May 18th. Moreover, I am named after him. If I could meet him, I would discuss our favorite hobbies, his sorrowful moments, and his vocation as Pope.

First, I would want to know more about his hobbies, and I would share my favorite hobbies with him: swimming and playing tennis. I have heard he went kayaking and skiing a lot in his life. A few years after John Paul II was elected Pope, he remembered how he loved skiing in his childhood and thought it would be a good time to go skiing again. So he secretly exited the Vatican with three other priests under the unseeing eyes of the Swiss Guards. However, a little boy discovered the Pope skiing. The secret was out. The Pope skis! I wonder if John Paul was shocked when the boy saw him.

Second, I would want to know more about his sorrowful moments, and I would tell him about my grandfather's recent death. Did he feel lonely after his mother, brother, and father died before he became pope? During World War II, the Nazis tried to capture him because he was a Catholic seminarian, but they did not succeed. He was prostrated on the floor in his room, and miraculously they did not see him. Was he praying the Rosary during this bitter time?

In addition to all those downcast times, Ali Agca attempted to kill Pope John Paul II when he was riding in his jeep in Saint Peter's Square on May 13, 1981, the feast of

Our Lady of Fatima. He was rushed to the hospital and slowly recovered. He said to the Blessed Mother, "The hand of the assassin pulled the trigger, but the hand of Mary directed the bullet and spared my life." I am amazed he visited Ali Agca in prison two years later to forgive him. I would be interested in hearing the conversation they had.

Third, if I could meet him, I would ask him about his daily routine as Pope. Well, I know he celebrated Mass every day. Besides that, what did he do? It was very brave of him to get only three hours of sleep sometimes and pray and work the rest of the day. When I wake up in the morning, I say my prayers, eat breakfast, go to Mass, and then do my schoolwork. I also like to sing in the Children's Choir. Did he like to sing?

Finally, I would discuss his travels. He was known as the traveling pope. I wonder how it felt to visit 129 countries. Did he ever get exhausted from traveling? Did he ever get plane sick? How did he communicate with others in foreign lands? I read he was a polyglot. Who inspired him to learn all these languages and how did he learn them? I speak Spanish and English from listening to my parents. I have traveled to ten states, but never out of the United States. I think it is wonderful that he journeyed to so many countries as the Vicar of Christ. I would remind him that in Matthew Jesus said, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." I would thank him so much for establishing World Youth Day. It made a big difference in the world, especially for my parents who attended it in Denver, Colorado in 1993.

Sometimes when I am afraid, I remember Saint John Paul II's words, "Be not afraid." He lived these words all throughout his life: on the mountain slopes, in his sad moments, and during his papacy. Even at the end of his life, when he suffered from Parkinson's disease, he was faithful to God and he never gave up.