

HUMILITY AND GENTLENESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL I

John Paul was known as "The Smiling Pope" because of his humility and gentleness.

"When he was appointed bishop in 1958, he chose the motto Humilitas, meaning quite simply: "Humility." He was the first pope to refuse being "crowned" with the papal tiara. As the first pope with a double-name, he chose his name in honour of his two immediate predecessors: Saints John XXIII and Paul VI. The inspiring humility of John Paul I was not a sad, sullen self-loathing. Rather it was a keen sense of his own littleness in the eyes of God, which served as a bridge of solidarity with all his brothers and sisters in the human family. Being little does not mean that God loves us less, but rather that we are all the more able to reach up and welcome His loving embrace. For John Paul I, God was a Father who loves us as His little ones, with the heart of a mother. He taught that: "God detests failings because they are failings. On the other hand, however, in a certain sense he loves failings since they give to him an opportunity to show his mercy and to us an opportunity to remain humble and to understand and to sympathize with our neighbour's failings" (Catechesis at the General Audience, 20 September 1978).

