

He said, “It often happens that I wake up at night and begin to think about a serious problem and decide I must tell the Pope about it. Then I wake up completely and remember that I am the Pope...” At night, he is said to have prayed, “Lord, I’ve done the best I can. It’s your church. I’m going to bed.”

John XXIII died of stomach cancer before Vatican II’s end. One newspaper printed a drawing of a mourning earth, captioned; “A Death In the Family.”

One of his writings, known as “**The Daily Decalogue of Pope John XXIII**,” lists ten spiritual goals *only for today*, which he developed after deep reflection on his own life and spiritual needs. Consider what yours would be!

- (1.) Only for today, I will seek to live the livelong day positively without wishing to solve the problems of my life all at once.
 - (2.) Only for today, I will take the greatest care of my appearance: I will dress modestly; I will not raise my voice; I will be courteous in my behavior; I will not criticize anyone; I will not claim to improve or to discipline anyone except myself.
 - (3.) Only for today, I will be happy in the certainty that I was created to be happy, not only in the other world but also in this one.
 - (4.) Only for today, I will adapt to circumstances, without requiring all circumstances to be adapted to my own wishes.
 - (5.) Only for today, I will devote 10 minutes of my time to some good reading, remembering that just as food is necessary to the life of the body, so good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.
 - (6.) Only for today, I will do one good deed and not tell anyone about it.
 - (7.) Only for today, I will do at least one thing I do not like doing; and if my feelings are hurt, I will make sure that no one notices.
 - (8.) Only for today, I will make a plan for myself: I may not follow it to the letter, but I will make it. And I will be on guard against two evils: hastiness and indecision.
 - (9.) Only for today, I will firmly believe, despite appearances, that the good Providence of God cares for me as no one else who exists in this world.
 - (10.) Only for today, I will have no fears. In particular, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe in goodness.
- Indeed, for 12 hours I can certainly do what might cause me consternation were I to believe I had to do it all my life.

Socials with the Saints

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Sources include: Vatican.va / CatholicSaints.Info / Gaetan, Victor. “A Town, A Secretary, and A Book,” *National Catholic Register*. | Watson, Richard A. “Pope Saint John XXIII: Army Medic and Military Hospital Chaplain,” *National Library of Medicine*. | *Encyclopedia Britannica*

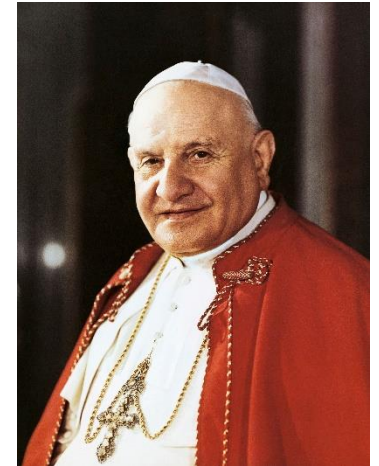
Pope St. John XXIII

Born: 25 Nov 1881 in Sotto il Monte, Italy

Died: 3 Jun 1963 in the Vatican

Feast Day: 11 Oct

The fourth of thirteen children, Angelo Giuseppe (Angel Joseph) Roncalli was the son of Italian sharecroppers who farmed eight acres of land in a tiny community from which the Alps can be seen. Among the shade of the beech trees where the farmers would take a break from their labors, stands a shrine to Our Lady of the Snows. There, his mother made a prayer consecrating Angelo’s life to Mary; he was her firstborn son.



For decades, Angelo would remember one day when he came home from school, and his mother was crying with her head on the kitchen table. Lying nearby were a few coins equivalent to just a few cents.

Though the family lacked in money, they were rich in faith. Angelo entered the minor seminary in his adolescence. As a teenager, he became a Third Order Franciscan. Earning a scholarship, he went to study in Rome. However, in 1901, he was drafted into the Italian army; his assignment as medic was to carry wounded infantry on stretchers into the field hospital, and he achieved the rank of sergeant. After his service, he completed a doctorate degree in theology in 1904, and was ordained a priest.

In his spiritual journal, he reflected on comparing oneself to other saints: “I am not St. Aloysius, nor must I seek holiness in his particular way, but according to the requirements of my own nature, my own character and the different conditions of my life. I must not be the dry, bloodless reproduction of a model, however perfect. God desires us to follow the examples of the saints by absorbing the vital sap of their virtues and turning it into our own life-blood, adapting it to our own individual capacities and particular circumstances. If St. Aloysius had been as I am, he would have become holy in a different way” (*Journal of a Soul*, 1903).

Every summer for thirty years, Fr. Angelo went home and stayed near St. John the Baptist church, where he would teach catechism classes for adults.

He served a nine-year assignment as secretary to the new local bishop, who taught him about meeting the needs of the local working people. During this time, Fr. Angelo also taught at the seminary which he had attended.

World War I meant a new wave of military service; Fr. Angelo's assignment was as chaplain, and he achieved the rank of lieutenant. He reflected, "It often happened that I had to fall down on my knees and cry like a child, alone in my room, unable to contain the emotion that I felt..." His youngest brother, "Pino," became a P.O.W. Pino survived, but was ill.

Returning home in 1918, Fr. Angelo began work as spiritual director of the local seminary. He was named *Monsignor*, and met with Pope Benedict XV. The pope appointed him Italian president of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith; an international organization coordinating mission work.

The Vatican recognized his talents, and appointed him as an apostolic visitor to Bulgaria, meaning that he would represent the pope on a specific mission; to protect the interests of the small Catholic community in a largely Eastern Orthodox region. He was made a bishop before departing.

Bishop Roncalli's assignment was lonely and often discouraging, but he carried out his mission. At the start of 1939, he received news that his mother was near death. Before he was able to visit her, Pope Pius XI passed away. This required him to stay at his post until a new pope was elected. Sadly, he was unable to see his mother before she died on February 20.

In 1935, he was sent as apostolic delegate to Greece on a combined diplomatic mission to Turkey, where he represented the Catholic minorities in these regions. He used his position to help save tens of thousands of Jews fleeing Europe, including Operation Baptism; an underground movement distributing forged baptismal certificates (created purely to save Jewish lives, not to make them Catholic). His heroic efforts are recognized to this day.

In December 1944, the pope named Bishop Roncalli as his representative to France, which had just been liberated from German occupation. Roncalli's task was not easy. Because of his success, he was named a cardinal by Pius XII. However, Roncalli regarded this appointment as the end of his career.

To his surprise; after Pius XII passed away in 1958, Angelo Roncalli was elected pope on the twelfth ballot. He was in his seventies, and knew that his election had been a 'compromise' between the cardinals, who expected his pontificate to be uneventful. Roncalli selected the name *John*, which was probably shocking to all who heard, because the last John had been an

antipope! Breaking protocol and speaking in Italian, he explained, "This name is dear to me because it is the name of my father. It is the name of the patron saint of the humble parish where I was baptized... and all who bore that name had a brief pontificate." The new pope was so obese that none of the prepared vestments fit him, so the largest one was let out and held together by pins for his first public appearance. Looking at himself in the mirror, he said, "This man will be a disaster on television!"

John began his pontificate by visiting children sick with polio, and then inmates at a local prison. When he visited a school for juvenile delinquents, the press wrote, "He talked to the youths in their own language."

Then, not even three months into his pontificate, he called for the first diocesan synod in the history of Rome, as well as for the revision of Church law, and for a Church council—the first in ninety years!

He said this in his opening address at the Second Vatican Council, using the traditional (formal) 'We,' referring to his office of the papacy: "In the daily exercise of Our pastoral office, it sometimes happens that We hear certain opinions which disturb Us—opinions expressed by people who, though fired with a commendable zeal for religion, are lacking in sufficient prudence and judgment in their evaluation of events. They can see nothing but calamity and disaster in the present state of the world. They say over and over that this modern age of ours, in comparison with past ages, is deteriorating. One would think from their attitude that history, that great teacher of life, had taught them nothing. They seem to imagine that in the days of the earlier councils everything was as it should be so far as doctrine and morality and the Church's rightful liberty were concerned. We feel that We must disagree with these prophets of doom, who are always forecasting worse disasters, as though the end of the world were at hand." – 11 Oct 1962

That night, he greeted people gathered at St. Peter's Square, saying, "Even the Moon showed up to greet us! When you go back to your homes, be tender to your children, to the elderly, to all people suffering...and say it's the Pope's tenderness." His tone of warmth and good humor is still remembered.

Among his other notable contributions as pope are his encyclicals *Mater et magistra*—about using social means for the common good, and *Pacem in terris*—advocating for freedom & human dignity toward world peace. He also worked for greater relations with other religions, created a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, promoted global missions, and elevated the Pontifical Commission for Cinema, Radio, and Television to the level of the Curia—the body which assists the pope in daily administration.