

## **From Fr. Melvin:**

**Blessed greetings!** My Sabbatical journey of 2017 takes us on the reflections of St. John XXIII, pope. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was born on November 25, 1881, Sotto il Monte, Bergamo (Italy). He was ordained to the priesthood on August 10, 1904 and took up various teaching roles including a seminary and professor of patrology (Church fathers/saints) at the Lateran University by 1924. As his reputation grew, he was appointed in offices of Popes Pius XI and XII till 1958, whereupon he was elected pope on October 28, 1958 and took the name **John**. He wrote a number of encyclicals for the progress of the Church including the work of peace in his notable *Pacem in Terris* released in April, 1963. He opened Vatican Council II on December 25, 1961 paving the way for much pastoral and spiritual discussion before implementation. He passed away on June 3, 1963 at 7:49 pm; his body was exhumed and found to be perfectly preserved and was displayed at St. Peter's Square on June 3, 2001. The Liturgical Calendar recalls his memorial on October 11.

For myself, I was but 10 years old and recalling my dad telling me he was a great pope while liking the name too—he gave me the confirmation name of John, and my brother's name too, John. Upon entering my priestly call, I took some reading of John XXIII in the popular text, Journal of a Soul. He was humble and admitted through the struggles of imperfection to become willing and giving. In his studies at the seminary in Rome he reflected: **This humble mind must accompany me everywhere, in class, studies, conversation, in everything. My motto—‘love to be unknown:’ my attitude ... shall be that of the divine Child Jesus, ‘listening to them and asking them questions.’** [pg. 133].

And now, on this Sabbatical, following the Angelus Prayer led by Pope Francis each Sunday at Noon, I managed to pass through crowds of people to find my place by the tomb of St. John XXIII. A photo I took in St. Peter's Basilica serves as a reflection of my prayerful meditations (see reverse). His features, attire in brilliant red, hands together, point the way above whereby an impressive print images what the pope cherished in his belief on the Eucharist. In the Real Presence John reflected: **The Mass is the adorable sacrifice in which God himself is at the same time Victim, Priest, and the divine Majesty to whom the sacrifice is offered;....It is impossible to find or imagine a closer bond between Man and God.** [Days of Devotion. Pg. 99]. The print, above the tomb, reveals St. Jerome receiving viaticum, Holy Communion before death, from a fellow disciple while another waits with the chalice of the Precious Blood of Christ. Like Jerome, we seek the Eucharist and look up to the angels (shown above) whose power to ascend prepare to take him to our God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*St. John XXIII, pray for us.*

