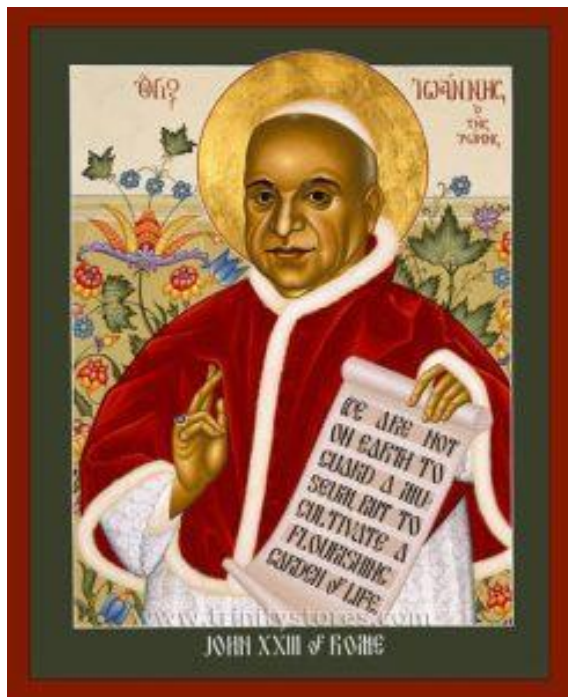


# Stewardship Saint for October: Saint John XXIII

ICSC | OCTOBER 7, 2024



Saint John XXIII is arguably the most beloved pope in the history of the Catholic Church. He touched people around the world in a way no other pope had ever done, earning him the affectionate title of “Good Pope John.”

He was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the third of 13 children, to poor tenant farmers in a village near Bergamo, Italy, about 25 miles northeast of Milan. As a

child, he was very devout and showed much academic promise. He completed his priestly formation at the diocesan seminary at Bergamo and was ordained in 1904. The bishop of Bergamo appointed Roncalli to be his secretary and to teach Church history at the seminary

During World War I, Roncalli was first conscripted into service as a hospital orderly, then a chaplain. Over the next 20 years Father Roncalli would be called to several Vatican posts. In 1921 he was appointed the national director of the Propagation of the Faith and soon thereafter he became a Vatican diplomat, serving in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and then France during World War II. As an archbishop, Roncalli established friendly relations with the Orthodox churches and worked to prevent the deportation of Jews during the German occupation of Greece. After the war years, he served as the Vatican’s first permanent observer at UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization).

Expecting that he would hold office only temporarily, Cardinal Roncalli was elected pope on October 28, 1958, just shy of his 77th birthday. He surprised everyone, however, when he began breaking papal traditions. He preached at his own coronation, insisting that he was not a prince but simply “a priest, a father and a good shepherd.” He made it a habit of visiting local parishes, prisons, hospitals, convalescent homes, schools, universities and charitable organizations.

On January 25, 1959, he announced that he would convene what would become the 21st ecumenical council of the Church, referring to it as a “new Pentecost.” He opened the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, insisting that it had not been convened to refute errors, but to update the Church and to “let some fresh air in.” He set the Catholic Church on a whole new pastoral plane, emphasizing the role of the laity, the collegiality of bishops, the authentic faith and goodness of non-Catholic Christians, and the dignity of all human beings. His address to open the council was full of hope for the future of the Church. The encyclicals of Pope John XXIII emphasized world peace, the unity of the Church, social justice and human rights.

He was diagnosed with stomach cancer in the fall of 1962 and passed away on June 3, 1963 with the whole world mourning his loss. He was beatified on September 3, 2000 and canonized along with John Paul II on April 17, 2014. His feast day is October 11.

## October Stewardship Prayer

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On October 11, 1962, Saint Pope John XXIII prayed the following prayer to open the Second Vatican Council. Thereafter, the bishops at the Council continued to pray this prayer together before every session.

***We stand before you, Holy Spirit,  
conscious of our sinfulness,  
but aware that we gather in your name.***

***Come to us, remain with us, and enlighten our hearts.  
Give us light and strength to know your will,  
to make it our own, and to live it in our lives.***

***Guide us by your wisdom, support us by your power,  
for you are God, sharing the glory of  
Father and Son.***

***You desire justice for all:  
enable us to uphold the rights of others;  
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance;  
or corrupted by fear or favor.***

***Unite us to yourself in the bond of love  
and keep us faithful to all that is true.***

***As we gather in your name  
may we temper justice with love,  
so that all our decisions may be pleasing to you,  
and earn the reward promised to  
good and faithful servants.***

***You live and reign with the Father and  
the Son, God, forever and  
ever.***

***Amen.***

