

Archivist: John Paul II display offers 'chance to relive' new saint's Baltimore visit



An exhibit commemorating the 1995 visit of Pope John Paul II to Baltimore opens April 24 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

By Maria Wiering

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More than 20 items linking Blessed John Paul II to the Archdiocese of Baltimore are on display at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The exhibit opened April 24 in the Basilica Museum, in the church's lower level. It coincides with the April 27 canonizations of Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII in Vatican City.

The display features photos and items commemorating Pope John Paul II's visit to Baltimore on Oct. 8, 1995, including vestments, memorabilia and a piece of wood from the altar where he celebrated Mass. During his 10-hour visit, the pope celebrated Mass for 60,000 people at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, and stopped at the basilica, Our Daily Bread, the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen and St. Mary's Seminary and University in Homeland.

Other objects include a facsimile of a telegram Pope John Paul II sent to Cardinal William H. Keeler, then archbishop of Baltimore, following his visit. Most items displayed are from the basilica and archdiocesan archives.

The exhibit makes it possible for Catholics "to relive" the pope's visit, said Tricia Pyne, director of the archdiocesan archives who helped curate the exhibit.

"(It's) a chance for Catholics and people of Baltimore and Maryland to remember this historic visit he made to our city, and how much more special it is now that he's being canonized," she said. "Hopefully it will bring up a lot of great memories of what a beautiful day it was for the people of the Archdiocese of Baltimore."

Some of the objects displayed are now second-class relics because they were

touched by a saint, Pyne noted.

“It’s just such a special time for the universal church,” she added.

The exhibit is open during the basilica’s regular hours.

April 27 will mark the first time two popes are canonized on the same day.

Pope John Paul II was pope from 1978 to his death in 2005. He was the third-longest serving pope in history. He was beatified in 2001.

Pope John XXIII was pope from 1958 to his death in 1963, and is known for calling the Second Vatican Council, which ran from 1962 to 1965.

In 1959, when the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen was dedicated, Pope John XXIII decreed the basilica Baltimore’s co-cathedral. He was beatified in 2000.

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