

# **‘His whole being was dedicated to the church’**

When Bishop Denis J. Madden served as associate secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in the Holy Land, he met with Pope John Paul II at least twice a year. Working on behalf of the Holy See, the association built religious and social service institutions and fostered interfaith communication.

“He asked specific questions about what would be happening at that time,” Bishop Madden remembered. “He was always very well informed and he always gave me the impression that he was not just making conversation. He wanted to know specific details.”

In his conversations with Bishop Madden, the pope never forgot the Premier See.

“He had a great friendship with (Cardinal William H.) Keeler,” Bishop Madden remembered. “He would invariably ask how Baltimore was doing and how Cardinal Keeler was doing.”

Bishop Madden said he was always impressed by Pope John Paul II’s holiness. He recalled being in Rome and witnessing the pope wash people’s feet during a Holy Thursday liturgy.

“He couldn’t bend over and he couldn’t kneel,” Bishop Madden said, “but he used a platform and moved from person to person and washed feet. It was a very moving experience.”

Bishop Madden sensed in the pope a man “completely dedicated to the Gospel.”

“His whole life, his whole being – even his physical being – was devoted to the church,” Bishop Madden said.