

Pope Francis on the anniversary of Pope Paul VI's death

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Blog for the Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Holding his weekly general audience today in the Vatican's air-conditioned Paul VI audience hall, Pope Francis reminded people that today is the 36th anniversary of the death of the pope who commissioned the hall. Pope Paul VI died Aug. 6, 1978, at the papal summer villa in Castel Gandolfo. He was 80 years old.

"I remember him with affection and admiration, given how he lived a life totally dedicated to serving the church, which he loved wholeheartedly," Pope Francis said today. "May his example as a faithful servant of Christ and the Gospel be an encouragement and stimulus for all of us."

Pope Francis will highlight the holiness of Pope Paul, who led the church from 1963 to 1978, again Oct. 19 when he presides over his beatification. The ceremony will take place during the closing Mass for the extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family.

In addition to guiding the church through the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council and its initial implementation, Pope Paul also is remembered for his encyclical, "Humanae Vitae," the 1968 teaching on the marriage, married love and procreation. The encyclical affirmed the church's prohibition of artificial contraception.

Pope Paul also was the first pope in the modern era to travel abroad, making nine foreign trips, including to the Holy Land, India, the United States, Uganda and the Philippines.

Pope Francis, over the past several months, also has highlighted as extremely important and still very relevant two documents by Pope Paul: "Ecclesiam Suam" on the church in the modern world; and "Evangelii Nuntiandi" on the proclamation of the Gospel.

Last year, to mark the 50th anniversary of his election as pope, we created a video with images from his papacy. You can watch it here:

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