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A Matter of Faith

By Barnaba Bienkowski

Unless you've been living under a rock, I'm sure you've heard that Pope John Paul II has passed away. I suspect that the Vatican's recent plethora of press coverage will bring people back into their respective faiths. Young people are realizing that the largest spontaneous gathering of human beings in one place was not Woodstock, nor a rap concert, a WTO protest, nor any other type of marijuana-related event. It was the pope's funeral. Young people are realizing that it's cool to have faith, and that it's OK to have a positive role model.

One of my professors pointed out to me that the funeral will be broadcast live on TV, which would be at 3:00 in the morning our time. Logically, the follow-up question was, "Which network will it be broadcast on?" I must admit I was shocked at his simple answer. He looked me in the eye and said, "all of them!"

What surprised me in ways that I cannot begin to explain was that people stayed up with me to watch the funeral. Not all of who were Catholic, or night people. They asked questions about the pope, the Church, history, tradition and religion. They gasped at the sheer number of people attending, and at the fact that every major world leader was in attendance. They held me when I cried. I cried not only that the pope had died but because I realized I was not alone.

You've all seen on CNN who John Paul II was and how he contributed to the fall of communism. What he did in Poland was nothing short of a miracle. Norman Davies (the leading historian of our days) refers to Poland as "God's playground" and rightfully so. Can you think of a better example of God's direct intervention into human history than John Paul's first pilgrimage to Poland? Communist officials in Poland banned newspapers from publicizing the popes' visit, and released notes to schoolteachers to teach students that he was a traitor against Poland. Yet 2 million people

came to celebrate Mass with him in a field outside of Krakow, and another million came to a similar field outside of Warsaw. People in the Soviet block realized that they were not alone. They vocalized that they wanted God in their lives, and that they wouldn't let any government take their faith away from them. When they heard Pope's message of peace and human rights, things changed seemingly overnight. Shortly thereafter, the solidarity movement which started in decrepit shipyards in Gdansk Poland picked up steam and uprooted communism. The domino effect continued and the next link in the chain was the fall of the Berlin Wall. People walked from one end of a torn city to another, from one end of a divided Europe to another, and they realized they were not alone. The world was saved from nuclear war by a kind old man in (God's) playground. We thank God for this, but we also remember John Paul II for this.

Ok, so he made the world I live in a better place, but who was he for me? Growing up, there was a portrait of the pope in my house. My parents also had many of his books of poetry and prayers. The pope has been a symbol of my faith just as much as the cross. It is not really feasible to sum up his influence on my life. He has inspired me in ways you couldn't understand unless he too inspired you. Now in his death, I realize that he inspired many others as well, and that many of you out there can understand what I mean without me having to say anything. Because faith needs no words to be expressed. Faith has no borders.

Faith is a beautiful thing. And if you have it you are not alone.

Lenny and George
By Peter C. Gravelle

Even the best-laid
plans of mice and men
leave emotions a'flotsam
in their waking march
towards

The best-laid
friends of friends
filling each others'
platonic halves
left

Best-cleaved
in the formatory
shakedown rending
each loving plane off its vertex.

Similar

We are so similar
It's undeniable
We take joy in the same things
And loathe similarly
But it would be boring
With one exception
The sex would be good

Heartbreak

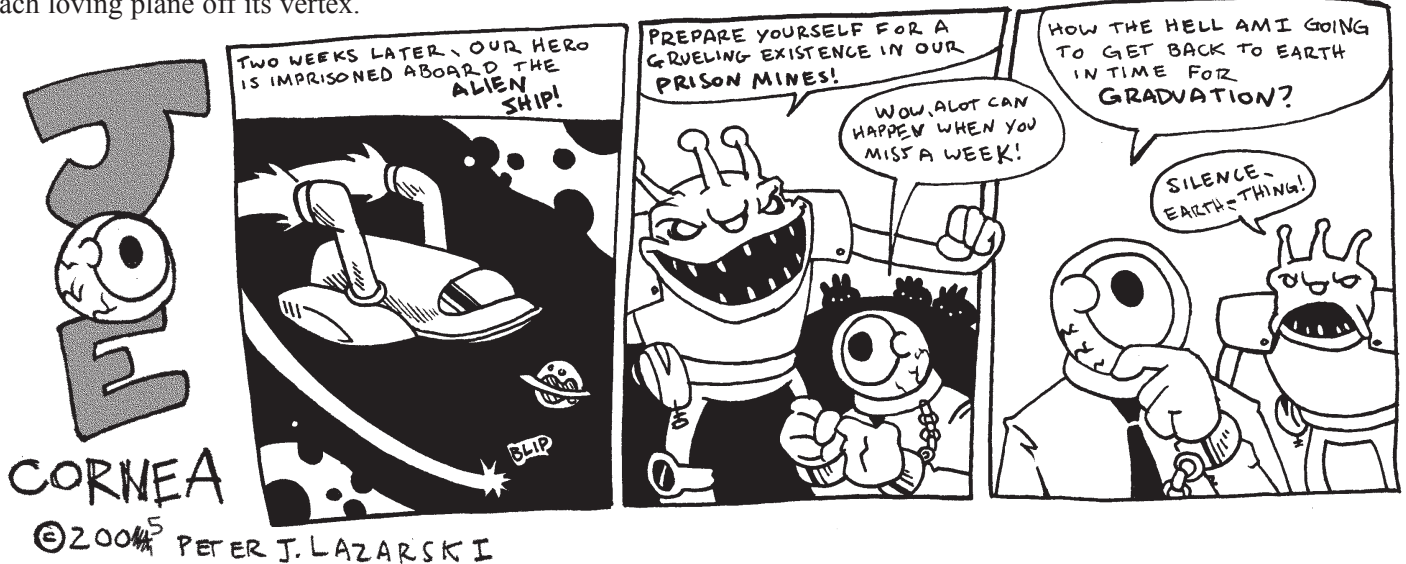
Heartbreak for me
Is not a choice
Every boy I connect with
I love
And then am heartbroken
When I find out the truth

Want

I write
Only because you inspire me to
I have
To get my feelings out
I wish
You'd read
I want
You to see what you do to me

P o e t r y .

J o a n n a L i c a t a



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