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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Catholics Divided on Vatican Decision to Beatify  
Pope John Paul II**

As the Vatican commemorates the life of Pope John Paul II this Sunday, Catholics remain divided on the Vatican's decision to beatify a man known both for his reform in the world and his resistance to reform within the Roman Catholic Church.

"It is with deep disappointment that many Catholics received the news of Pope John Paul II's beatification," said Jim FitzGerald, Executive Director of Call To Action. "The Vatican side-stepped its own waiting period policy to honor a man whose legacy remains controversial and whose papacy was a divisive and often painful experience for millions of Catholics worldwide."

While Karol Wojtyla's keen engagement in world politics, a desire to celebrate youth and a commitment to peace will be part of his legacy, we cannot ignore the fact that his pontificate is responsible for deep wounding and division within the church.

Perhaps his most egregious legacy lies in his disregard for the thousands of sexual abuse allegations that reached the Vatican during his nearly three decades as pope. At the time of his death, the worldwide scope of sexual abuse allegations still had yet to be seen and the true history of his failure to address the issue continues to unfold.

Other Catholics remember Pope John Paul II's resistance and retrenchment on liberation, feminist and other theologies that supported the poor, women and other marginalized groups. His discipline of theologians in these fields left many Catholics shocked by a papacy that would withhold its support of theologies and spirituality that sustained poor and oppressed people.

His attempt to suppress discussion of women's ordination and his stance against the moral equality of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics have also left deep scars on the lives of many who sought to answer God's call to minister and live as God created them. Equally wounding was John Paul II's rejection of condoms and open discussion of sexuality in the modern world that compromised sexual health access and agency for millions globally.

"While many will celebrate the life of Karol Wojtyla's and the good that he nurtured within the world," said FitzGerald, "we must not forget that this will be a painful day for those whose lives and spirits were wounded by the positions of a Pope who could not see that in trying to protect the institutional church, he was wounding many of the faithful."

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