

On May 21st Friends of John Paul II Foundation of Washington, DC held its annual birthday celebration for Saint John Paul II, his 103rd this time, at the Army Navy Club in Arlington, VA. Joining the chapter for this joyous occasion were chapter friends, distinguished guests, and partner organizations, including Polish American Congress, Polish National Alliance, Coalition of Polish Americans, Order of Malta, Embassy of the Republic of Poland, Marian Fathers of Immaculate Conception, American Council for Polish Culture, Polish American Arts Association and the Polish parish in Silver Spring.

This year's event served an additional purpose, recognizing the finding of a home for an artistic rendering of the Pope. The Chapter would like to recognize the generous contributions provided by the cultural section of the Polish Embassy via Vice Consul Edyta Holodynska and by Carl and Jean Sharek, who left a living legacy through their funding of a bronze bust of Saint John Paul II.

The event was headlined by Anthony Eames, PhD, the Director of Scholarly Initiatives at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, who delivered a stirring talk entitled "The Shared Cause of Freedom: Pope Saint John Paul II, President Ronald Reagan and the Rollback of Communism". He spoke about the unique relationship between Pope Saint John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan, and the significance of faith and freedom, principles which guided both of them throughout their lives. Both men, he emphasized, appreciated the fragility of freedom, as well as its indivisibility and close connection with truth and morality. Both men, he noted, survived harrowing assassination attempts in 1981 and then met as brothers in 1982. And both subsequently shared a belief that their survival was no accident, rather a sign that they were meant to help usher Eastern Europe to freedom and restore faith to the West. In this shared spirit, the Ronald Reagan Foundation and Institute agreed to accept the bust of Pope Saint John Paul II and place it at the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California.

The beautiful bronze bust was commissioned by the Friends of John Paul II Foundation and given form by a prominent artist and sculptor, Gordon Kray, creator of several must-see D.C. city landmarks including a statue of Virgin Mary at St. Matthews Cathedral and the Kahlil Gibran monument on Massachusetts Avenue. The artist also addressed the guests, keeping them spellbound with stories of creating the bronze papal bust and his other artworks.

Dr. Hugh Dempsey, D.Ed, GCMOb, Vice Regent of the Order of Malta served as the Master of Ceremonies, leading with a description of the seemingly providential crystallization of the Reagan Library connection, and tenor David Cook and Stasia and Olek Skrypczuk delighted the guests with their voice and violin musical performances. Reverend Canon Philip MajkaMajka delivered a moving invocation and Father Jim McCormack, MIC sent the guests home with his benediction.



Gordon Kray, Sculptor of John Paul II Bust



Raymond and Cecilia Glembocki, Roza Pace, Dr Anthony Eames, Gordon Kray and Hugh Dempsey, D.Ed, GCMOb



David Cook, Cecilia Glembocki, Roza Pace, Dr. Anthony Eames, Gordon Kray, Hugh Dempsey



De. Anthony Eames

