

BIOGRAPHY OF GIOVANNI BATTISTA MONTINI PAUL VI

September 26, 1897: Giovanni Battista Montini is born at Concesio (Brescia) to Giorgio Montini and Giuditta Alghisi, the second of three brothers. On September 30 he is baptized in the parish church of Concesio by the archpriest Don Giovanni Fiorini. May 29, 1920: Ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Brescia and on May 30 celebrates his first Mass in the sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie in Brescia.

In October 1925 becomes national ecclesiastical assistant to the FUCI (Federation of Italian Catholic University Students).

In 1937 appointed Deputy Secretary of State, and in 1952 appointed Pro-Secretary of State for ordinary affairs.

November 1, 1954: elected Archbishop of Milan, and January 6, 1955 makes his solemn entry to the archdiocese.

June 21, 1963: elected Pope, taking the name Paul VI.

September 29, 1963: opens the second session of the Second Vatican Council.

January 4-6, 1964: makes a historic pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

August 6, 1964: publishes *Ecclesiam Suam*, his first encyclical and programme of his pontificate.

December 2-5, 1964: travels to India for the International Eucharistic Congress.

September 3, 1965: Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* on the Eucharist.

October 3-5, 1965: travels to New York to visit the UN General Assembly.

December 8, 1965: closes the Second Vatican Council.

March 26, 1967: encyclical *Populorum Progressio* on the theme of development.

May 13, 1967: goes on pilgrimage to Fatima.

July 25-26, 1967: trip to Turkey.

January 1, 1968: celebrates the first World Peace Day.

July 25, 1968: encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on the defense of human life.

August 22-25, 1968: trip to Colombia.

June 10, 1969: visit to the headquarters of the International Labour Organization in Geneva.

July 31-August 2, 1969 visit to Uganda.

November 26 to December 6, 1970: trip to the Far East. Assassination attempt in Manila.

December 24, 1974: opens the Holy Door in St. Peter's for the Holy Year.

December 8, 1975: Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

December 25, 1975: Closes the Holy Year and proclaims the «civilization of love».

April 21, 1978: writes to the terrorists of the Red Brigades «on his knees» to ask for the release of Aldo Moro.

August 6, 1978 Feast of the Transfiguration: dies at 8:40pm in Castel Gandolfo after reciting the Our Father.

August 12, 1978: buried as requested by him in the bare earth of the Vatican Grottoes.

October 19, 2014: beatified by Pope Francis.



Brescia, Brescia! The city that not only gave me birth, but much of the civil, spiritual and human tradition, teaching me in addition what it means to live in this world and always offering me a framework that I believe can hold together the subsequent experiences disposed in the course of time by Divine Providence.

(29 June 1963)

And to the Church, to whom I owe everything and that was mine, what can I say? The blessings of God be upon you; be aware of your nature and your mission; have a sense of the true and profound needs of humanity; and walk in poverty, in other words in freedom, strong and in love with Christ.

(from Thoughts in the Face of Death)

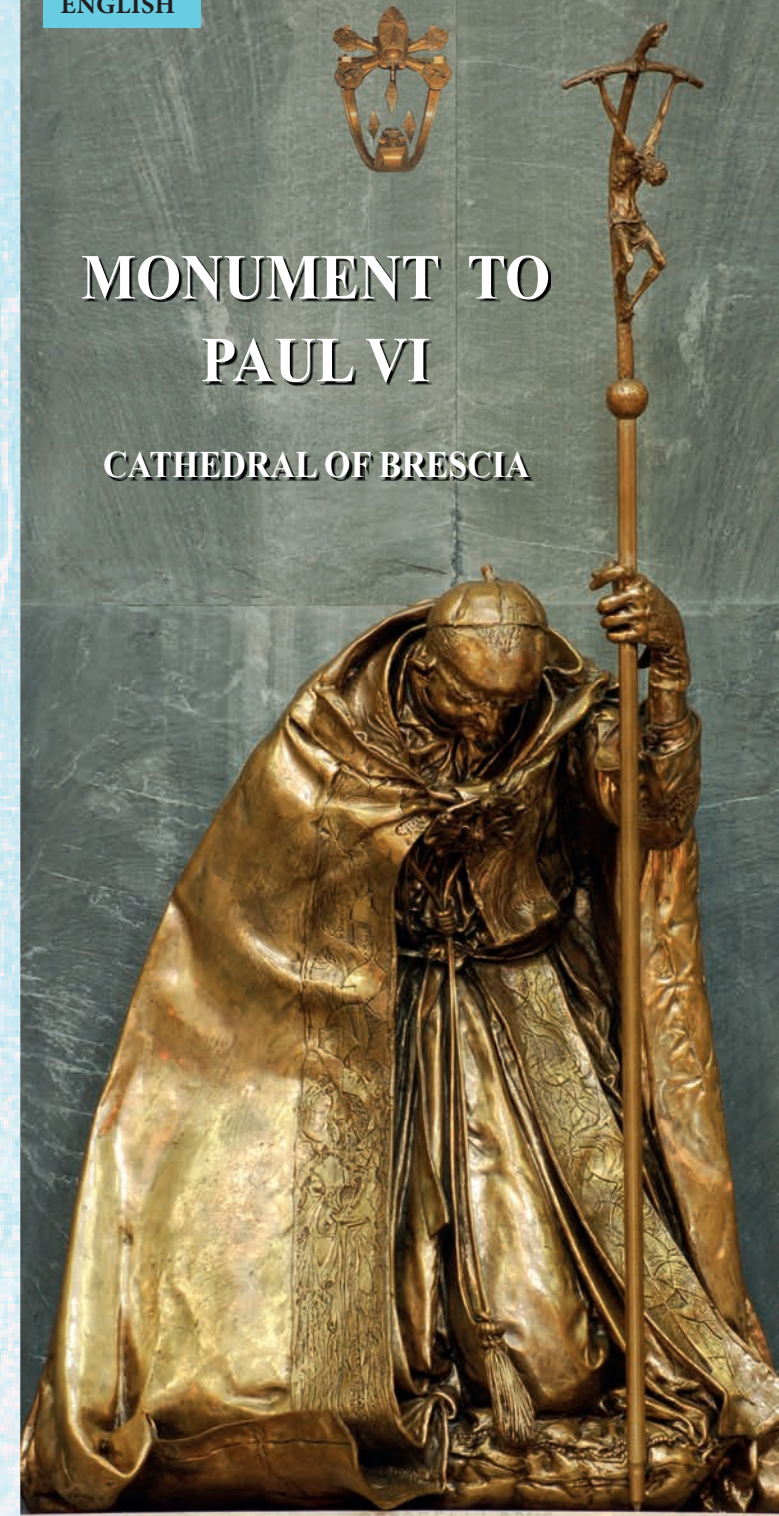
Taking leave of the stage of this world and going to meet the judgment and mercy of God, I should say so many things, so many. To the Church: may she listen to some of our words, which we spoke for her with seriousness and with love. On the Council: may it be brought to a good end and may its prescriptions be faithfully put into practice. On ecumenism: may the work of coming closer to the separated Brethren be continued, with much understanding, much patience, with great love, but without deviating from the true doctrine. On the world: do not believe it will be benefitted by copying its thoughts, customs and tastes, but by studying it, loving it, serving it.

(from his Testament)

ENGLISH

MONUMENT TO PAUL VI

CATHEDRAL OF BRESCIA



A MONUMENT BETWEEN MEMORY AND FAITH

The Cathedral of Brescia, which preserves the memory and the mortal remains of its bishops, now also associates with this the memory of her Son who became Pastor of the universal Church, a remembrance conceived not as a celebration of the “primacy of power,” but as a humble and mystical sign of the service rendered to the Church of Christ and the whole of humanity in very problematic and calamitous times, but also rather promising ones. The choice of the sculptor in the person of Professor Raffaele Scorzelli was motivated by his spiritual closeness and intimate familiarity with Paul VI, as well as his well-deserved reputation as a great artist.

(† Luigi Morstabilini, Bishop of Brescia)

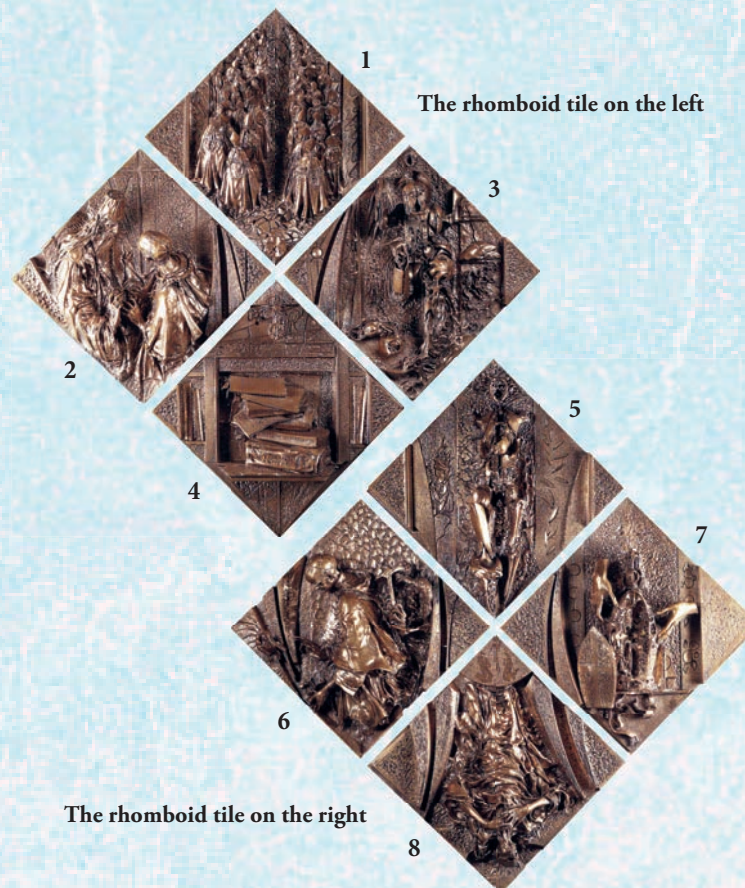
There are works of art, both ancient and modern, that come into being as a result of a laborious and painful process, and others that are born from a deep emotion with an overwhelming need to be created. The opening of the Holy Door for the Jubilee Year, promulgated by Paul VI on May 23, 1974 with the Bull *Apostolorum limina* and inaugurated on Christmas Eve of that same year, was one of those events that touched most deeply the tormented sensibility of Lello Scorzelli, who was present for it. When he was commissioned by the Diocese of Brescia to design a monument to Pope Paul VI, he had no doubt that the appropriate monument should in fact depict the opening of the Holy Door.

The monument of deep originality revolves around the figure of Paul VI kneeling on the threshold of the Holy Door, which has just been opened. The opening is bordered by a profiling in Botticino marble and backed by slabs of unpolished slate. The figure of the Pontiff stands alone in the opening of the Door, leaning on his cross-shaped crozier that shows in a dramatic twist in the body of the crucified Christ. The person of Paul VI, in perfect solitude, is defined by a line of absolute purity and sweetness, although the anxious and troubled expression of the face, with strongly pronounced and quite lifelike features, adds a further dramatic note, making this figure of the Pope, which is really something absolute and sculpturally complete, a metaphor whose significance is not able to be defined once and for all because it is open to a plurality of meanings.

Alongside the figure of the Pontiff **the two bronze doors** of the Gate, burnished and hammered, with the knobs in the round, illustrated and well-polished, placed in the center of each leaf represent respectively, from right to left; the *Conversion of Saul on the Road to Damascus* and *the Shipwreck on the Coast of Malta*.

At the center of the lintel is fixed, also in bronze, the papal coat of arms, curled like a conch shell, and the curved line that contains it also connects it in a harmonious rhythm to the underlying folded line that encloses and defines the figure of the Pope.

The base is made from a slab of black Belgian marble, highly polished, with an inscription of extreme sobriety: **PAULUS VI PONT. MAX. BRIXIENSIS**. This slab displays eight rhomboid panels assembled in two groups of four each, but still in rhomboid form. In the modeling of these panels, Scorzelli brings to fruition the plastic conception and style already seen in his other important works. Each panel, as well as narrating a specific historical event relevant to the life of Paul VI, contains an extraordinary evocation of many other realities fixed in the richness of symbolism: every sign, every depiction tends to express the historical fact, while dramatic deformation accents and exaggerates the truth of things.



The rhomboid tile on the left

The rhomboid tile on the right

The rhomboid tile on the left groups together four episodes concluded within a schema also in rhomboid form, depicting (in order top, left, right, bottom):

- **The close of the Council** (1). The two throngs of the Council Fathers proceed on the disordered inlays of the engraved background. The figures assume in addition, in their choral structure, the sign of hands in prayer. The Holy Spirit depicted on the path of the Council Fathers evokes and defines the true reality of the Church, which is moved by the Spirit of God.
- **The meeting with Patriarch Athenagoras I** (2). This historical event marked an extremely significant and decisive pastoral moment of the pontificate of Paul VI. The three crosses at the bottom: that of Jesus, that of St. Peter and that of St. Andrew, refer to the situation of the separated Churches and recall the way to go forward to achieve unity in the one sacrifice of Christ.
- **The evils and trends of the contemporary world** (3). The evils are essentially summed up in violence, indifference and arrogance. This monster with three faces crushes the very roots of life with a three-dimensional fist.
- **The encyclicals** (4) are shown leaning on the Bible (the copy reproduced here was in the studio of Paul VI) as their natural source of inspiration. In the background is engraved the text of the letter that the Pope sent to the Red Brigades on April 21, 1978 to demand the release of Aldo Moro, a document of exalted civil moral teaching and of Christian love.

The rhomboid tile on the right groups together four episodes concluded within a schema also in rhomboid form, depicting (in order top, left, right, bottom):

- **The speech at the UN on war and peace** (5). War is shown in the depths of its degradation by the monster that dominates the center and reaches out to beget a great number of other deaths. To the right and left are shown signs of love: the hand of the Pope blessing and a small olive branch.
- **The attack in Manila** (6). The bomber, losing his individual connotation, takes on that of the more mysterious and disturbing evil that lurks behind whoever is unsuspecting and trusting. The Pope holds in his left hand the symbol of peace and blesses with his right hand.
- **The abandonment of the tiara** (7) as a symbol of domination and human power also means the abandonment of worldly possessions. Two very light hands place, in an attitude of free will, the tiara depicted here primarily as a container of corrupt and corruptible things. On the left side appears the miter, uncorrupted and intact, a symbol of pastoral restoration suited to the first bishop of Christendom.
- **The death of Paul VI** (8). A scene of intense emotion, made in the interpretation of the sculptor, with a composition scanned into two contrasting blocks: the first formed by the reversed image of the dying Pope, and the other formed by the scene of the Transfiguration (the feast is celebrated on August 6, the day of the death of Paul VI), with the three figures of Jesus, Moses and Elijah engraved in a flattened relief that displays the extreme and luminous contemplation of the dying Pope.

(Pier Virgilio Begni Redona)

(Text taken from the volume *Il monumento a Paolo VI*, Brescia 1984)