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PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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DEATH OF POPE JOHN PAUL

Mr. Speaker, as all Honourable Members will know the death occurred on 29 September, 1978 of his Holiness Pope John Paul. I move "that the House notes the death on 29 September, 1978 of his Holiness Pope John Paul, and expresses its profound regret at his passing."

It was with deep shock that we heard eleven days ago of the death of Pope John Paul. Elected to the Papacy on 26 August, his reign was tragically brief -- no Pontiff in modern times had so short a tenure. In that lies a very human tragedy, that of a man chosen for his Church's highest office but who almost in the same hour was taken from it. Yet, even in such a short time, Pope John Paul had been able to make a strong impression, winning widespread affection with his simple, self-effacing style.

Pope John Paul was ordained in 1935, and he thereafter rose to Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal and finally Pope. During this period he displayed a capacity for reasonableness and moderation. He also eschewed ostentation and much of the pomp and ceremony of ecclesiastical office.

On being elected Pope, he chose to have a simple ceremony, for his installation, in St. Peter's Square.

Pope John Paul's entire ecclesiastical life was spent in Northern Italy but his was no narrow experience. As Archbishop of Venice his Diocese included not only this historic and beautiful city, but also the highly industrialised area of Mestre.

One of his strengths which was undoubtedly a factor in his being chosen to succeed Pope Paul VI was his involvement in pastoral work, including the daily round of visits to the sick, to schools, factories and seminaries.

Another factor may have been his outgoing warmheartedness. Pope John Paul combined an unassuming manner with infectious good humour. Although Pope John Paul had displayed an attachment to orthodoxy, he was prepared to travel down the road of reform opened by the second Vatican Council.

He showed deep concern for the poor and the under-privileged. He saw the need for social change and symbolised this by his own personal actions.

He was a man of decision tempered by good-humoured tolerance, a man of austerity but with considerable personal charm, a literate man but one able to communicate simply and directly to all peoples. His untimely death will be a loss to both his Church and to mankind.

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