

Archdiocese of Detroit

For Immediate Release

At St. Ambrose Parish on Sunday, April 10, at 10:45 a.m.

Release of Doves of Peace in Memory of Pope John Paul II

150 children from the St. Ambrose Parish Religious Education Program, along with their families, teachers and pastor, Fr. Timothy Pelc, will assemble on the ARK plaza of their church building Sunday, April 10, at 10:45 a.m. to **reenact a ceremony that had become a hallmark of Pope John Paul II's meetings with youth—the release of doves, a traditional biblical sign of peace.**

“Two doves will be released and sent heavenward toward their home,” said Fr. Pelc. “It’s a sign of our releasing our hold on this much-loved father-figure and letting the soul of Pope John Paul now fly uninhibited into the great mercy of God.”

The ARK plaza at St. Ambrose, where the ceremony will take place, is on the west side of St. Ambrose Church, 15020 Hampton, Grosse Pointe Park. The church is one block north of Jefferson and one block east of Alter Road at the Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park border. For more information, call 313-822-2814.

The Holy Father participated in similar dove-release ceremonies many times at World Youth Days and at St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican.

The last time Pope John Paul participated in a dove-release ceremony was at the end of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican, Sunday, January 30, 2005. The pontiff was addressing thousands of young people from an Italian Catholic organization who marked January as a month to promote peace.

He was flanked at his studio window by a pair of 8-year-olds — a boy and a girl — who urged the world to remember children who live in countries wracked by war. John Paul prayed that **young people, “who so desire peace, become courageous and tenacious builders of peace.”**

Each of the children at his side sent a dove flying, but the white birds, perhaps alarmed by Rome’s unusual cold spell, almost immediately darted back into his studio.

Laughing, the ailing pontiff seemed determined to set the symbol free. He grabbed one of the doves as an aide returned the birds to the windowsill, and he shooed it out the window and playfully patted the boy on the head. After a quick flight over the square, the bird quickly fluttered inside again as the pope grinned.

Some have now interpreted this unusual occurrence to be a sign that the message of peace that John Paul had brought to the world was now returning to rest with him in his final days.

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