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Inspired by pope to become a priest

By **Bill Osinkski** | Friday, April 1, 2005, 11:16 PM

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As a 14-year-old in Poland, Janusz Zych cried tears of joy when he heard that a man from a nearby town had been elected Pope.

Now, the papacy and the life of that man, Karol Wotyla, are coming to their end — and Zych's tears have a different tenor.

"It's very difficult for me. I get very emotional," said Zych, who serves as priest to a community of Polish Catholics in metro Atlanta. About 100 members of that community came to a mass and prayer service dedicated to Pope John Paul II Friday night. They started praying together at about 9 p.m., and they finished about 2 a.m. this morning, at the regular First Friday-First Saturday service at St. Marguerite D'Youville Catholic Church in Lawrenceville.

Zych said he knew that the man who helped inspire him to become a priest might not be alive at the end of the service.

"We know that the Holy Father is going to die, and we know that Our Lord Jesus Christ is waiting for him," Zych said.

Zych said he is also confident that history will be more than kind to John Paul II. "He will be called a great pope," Zych said.

For many others at the service, the failing health of the Pope was a deeply-felt personal sorrow.

Ewa Janulewicz, of Alpharetta, brought a rosary blessed by John Paul. She can still recall the moment when she met him.

"Just to touch his hand, it was like electricity," she said.

"Personally, I think he is one of the most important men in history," she said. "He completely changed the world."

Tomasz Wasowicz, of Stone Mountain, said he prayed that the pope will be at peace. "If God decides that this is his time, then we have to be OK with that," he said.

Janusz Komor prepared to play the organ for the services, because the regular organist, his wife Wanda, is in Rome, praying with the pilgrims in St. Peter's square.

The trip, which included four other members of the Polish congregation, was pre-planned, but he said he knew his wife was both happy and sad to be near the pope at this time.

As for himself, Komor said he would offer prayers of thanksgiving for the life of John Paul II. "I want to be thankful for all the years he gave us," Komor said.

Minutes later, Komor started playing the organ, and the soloist sang in doleful tones a hymn for the pope who had a deep devotion to Mary, the mother of Christ. Its title: "Serdeczna Matko" or "Dearest Mother."