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MEDIA ADVISORY:

Archdiocese of Toronto celebrates announcement of two future saints: Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II

TORONTO (July 5, 2013) Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, offered the following statement on news today that Pope Francis had signed canonization decrees that will elevate two former popes, Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II to sainthood at a future date to be determined.

"I join with Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Toronto and around the world, and with many people of other faiths, in giving thanks to God for the wonderful example of lived faith, joyful service and inspired teaching exhibited by both Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II. Saints serve as role models for our Christian family and we know how close these spiritual shepherds have been to their flock, both in life and in death. When canonized, they will join the company of those holy men and women formally recognized by the Church as having demonstrated lives of extraordinary Christian virtue."

Blessed John Paul II made history in 1978 becoming the first non-Italian pope in more than 400 years. He served as Pontiff from 1978 until his death in 2005, making 104 international pilgrimages including three to Canada, most recently for World Youth Days in 2002.

Blessed John XXIII was elected to the papacy in 1958 and served until his death in 1963. He organized the historic Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), addressing the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. Suffering from stomach cancer, he passed away in 1963, leading to the election of Pope Paul VI.

The Archdiocese of Toronto is Canada's largest diocese, stretching from Toronto north to Georgian Bay and from Oshawa to Mississauga. It is home to 1.9 million Catholics and 225 churches, with mass celebrated in more than 30 languages each week.

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