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Pope John

XXIII

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"What matters to me is the effort of finding a little of the good side."—Pope John. (Oct. 17, 1938, in reference to persons and things at Athens while he was Apostolic Delegate.)

When historians write about great men of the 20th Century they will have an impressive number of personalities to consider — men who are known for their deeds in two world wars; dictators who not only managed to hold millions of their subjects and indeed the whole world at ransom; men who are famous for unbelievable scientific discoveries and achievements. However, how famous or infamous they may be, they will have to put on a pedestal the little, humble Champion of Peace and Goodwill — our beloved Pope John XXIII.

Pope John was born of peasant parents in northern Italy, not far from the Swiss border, and his desire in life was to be just a humble parish Priest. However, Destiny wanted more of him and he rose to the call to the Supreme Office of the Church with a simple desire to unite the peoples of the world under the slogan of peace on earth and goodwill toward all men. When he then called an Ecumenical Council in order to modernise the Church in pursuing this aim and when he told world leaders at a critical moment to face squarely "their tremendous responsibilities before the tribunal of History and the judgment seat of God" the world started to look up to him. The most significant fact about Pope John is that he was better known amongst other denominations than the Catholic Church, who took him more or less for granted.

The universal desire for the truth and love for one another has appealed to each race, colour and creed and mankind has seen in him the light to a better united world. It seems a great pity that he could not guide the Ecumenical Council to a successful conclusion and that his great influence with the leaders of the world should have been interrupted. But the weight and sanctity of his convictions will continue to exercise an impact.

"In any event," writes Walter Lippman in the Weekly News, "the modernising movement can perhaps be arrested, but it cannot for long be turned back. For what Pope John began will have very big consequences, and the History of our world will be different because he lived."

—W.R.