

[www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/baltimore\\_city/bal-garden1023,0,2120459.story](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/baltimore_city/bal-garden1023,0,2120459.story)

**baltimoresun.com**

## Pope John Paul II Prayer Garden opens at city Basilica

By Jacques Kelly | [jacques.kelly@baltsun.com](mailto:jacques.kelly@baltsun.com)

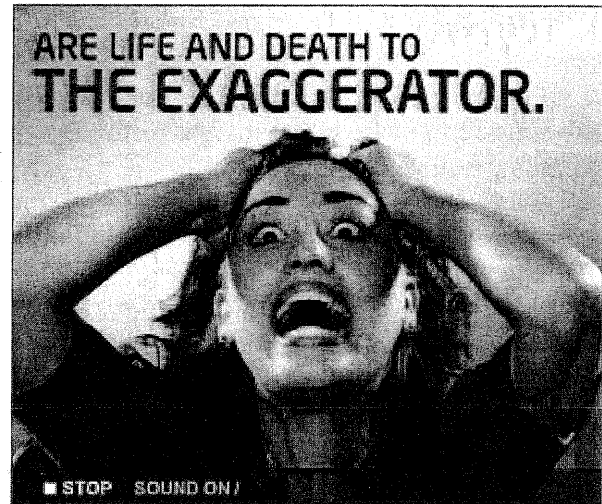
Baltimore Sun reporter

12:28 PM EDT, October 23, 2008

Calling for a "sanctuary in a suffering city," Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien dedicated the Pope John Paul II Prayer Garden in downtown Baltimore this morning before unveiling a bronze statue of the pontiff.

Speaking at the intersection of Charles and Franklin streets, the archbishop said he hoped this new green space, with its dogwood trees and roses, would become a symbol of the rebirth of "many, many more Baltimore street corners."

He described Baltimore as a city "where too many street corners are just places where drug deals take place and where gunfire inevitably follows."



Nearly 150 people, some of whom stood in an adjoining parking garage, watched as O'Brien and artist Joseph Sheppard lifted a white cloth from a bronze likeness of Pope John Paul II, who visited Baltimore in 1995 and spent part of an afternoon at the adjoining Basilica of the Assumption after celebrating Mass at Oriole Park at Camden Yards.

The archbishop asked that the new corner garden "reflect the love of God that was so evident on that October day in 1995."

While construction crews completed the fenced garden several weeks ago, the pope's statue became the center of attention this morning.

The likeness shows the pope embracing two children and was based on a photo of his arrival at BWI Airport in 1995.

The boy in the photo was 9-year-old Justin Farinelli, who is now 22, and after residing in Pasadena, moved to Gainesville, Fla.

Sheppard "took some liberties, but they are all appreciated," Farinelli said.

The artist, who was born in Owings Mills and spends much of his time in Pietrasanta, Italy, recalled a meeting with Pope John Paul II in Italy.

"I kissed his hand," Sheppard said. "He had an amazing charisma. I can't even remember if I spoke English or Italian to him. I was identified as a painter, and he embraced me warmly. He had a powerful presence."

Sheppard also said he had completed portraits of John Paul II and another of the current pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI, which will hang in the North American College in Vatican City.

"I came to honor Joe," said business executive and philanthropist Henry A. Rosenberg Jr., who stood in the crowd.

Cardinal William H. Keeler gave the opening blessing and said, "May this garden be a living memorial to religious freedom." Also participating was William H. Borders, who formerly headed the Baltimore Archdiocese. Soprano Beverly Williams sang "Ave Maria" to open the ceremonies and then closed them with "Amazing Grace."

Stephen Kelly, of landscape architects Mahan Rykiel Associates, the firm that created said fish-shaped design for the garden, said that Sheppard's statue aptly caught the pope's "tenderness for children." He also pointed to a stone tablet incised with the symbols of Judaism, Islam and Christianity to show the ecumenical beliefs of the pope.

Iron craftsman John Gutierrez pointed to the fencing and gates he created for the garden at his studio in the Clipper Mill section of Woodberry.

The garden will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.

Copyright © 2008, The Baltimore Sun