

Brazil Declares 7 Days of Mourning for Pope

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The Brazilian people, "the largest Catholic country in the world", is profoundly saddened by the death of John Paul II, says the message of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva released today by the government's Foreign Relations Ministry.

"The death of Pope John Paul II saddens profoundly the Brazilian people, who had great affection to the Holy Father. His three visits to Brazil will always be remembered with great emotion.

"The song "John of God", intoned spontaneously by the Brazilian people, expressed this relation of fondness and respect.

"Until the end of his life, John Paul II led his mission with energy and lucidity. The suffering that he did not hide, in the last years, has never changed his determination.

"In 26 years of pilgrimage to the most different regions of the planet, the Pope created a rich and multifaceted work, reinforcing the hope for a world of justice and freedom.

"His spiritual leadership was reflected in his personal indefatigable fight on behalf of human dignity; in the search for dialog between cultures and religions; in the courageous position in favor of peace and right; and in the great determination to eliminate the social and economic marginalization of individuals and nations.

"Being the largest Catholic country of the world, where people from the most varied beliefs live together harmoniously, Brazil feels moved by the loss of one of the men who, as few, influenced, in a striking and positive form, the course of contemporary history."

President Lula has decreed a seven-day official mourning period for the Pope throughout the country.

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