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Pope Francis on John XXIII: 'I see him with the eyes of my heart'

by Joshua J. McElwee

The Francis Chronicles

Pope Francis

Pope Francis has expressed an affinity for Pope John XXIII, calling the late pope's secretary on the phone Monday and saying "I see him with the eyes of my heart," according to the Vatican's semi-official newspaper.

Francis, according to a report Tuesday in *L'Osservatore Romano*, called John XXIII's former secretary at the late pope's summer home to personally thank the secretary for a letter he had sent to Francis suggesting an official celebration of the 50th anniversary this June of John's 1963 death.

"It was a very great surprise and I like to consider this telephone call made to this place where John XXIII was born rather than to me myself: as a tribute to him and to his roots," said the secretary, Archbishop Loris Francesco Capovilla, according to *L'Osservatore Romano*.

"I see him with the eyes of my heart," Capovilla said Francis had said on the call, regarding how he views John XXIII.

Pope John, who was elected to the papacy in 1958 at age 77, was responsible for calling the Second Vatican Council, a 1962-65 meeting of the world's bishops which saw substantial discussions on the shape and mission of the church.

Many consider the discussions of the council to have led directly to the church's reforms in the 1960's and 70's, including the use of vernacular during the liturgy and openness to the modern world.

John XXIII died June 3, 1963. His immediate successor was Pope Paul VI, who was elected to the papacy on June 21, 1963.

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