



John Paul II (1920-2005)



‘Man connects his deeper human identity with belonging to the nation, and he also understands his work as a multiplication of the common good worked out by his countrymen, realizing that this work is used to multiply the achievements of the whole human family, all people living in the world’

The Encyclical of John Paul II, *„Laborem exercens*’, 14 September 1981.

‘There is a basic sovereignty of society, which is expressed in the culture of the Nation. At the same time, it is the sovereignty by which man is the most sovereign.’

Speech of John Paul II to the representatives of the world of culture, church of St. Cross in Warsaw, 13 June 1987.





APN

Holy Mass at Zaspas in Gdańsk with the participation of John Paul II during his third pilgrimage to Poland. Among the faithful there are numerous flags and banners with the inscription 'Solidarity', 8 June 1987.



Photo: Wojtek Laski/East News

Karol Wojtyła with his mother Emilia, 1920.

Karol Wojtyła with his father Karol, an officer of the Polish Army, 1926.



Photo: Laski Diffusion/East News

Youth

Karol Wojtyła was born in Wadowice on 18 May 1920. His mother, Emilia, died when he was 9 years old. From that time the boy was brought up by his father Karol, an officer of the Austrian army, and later of the Polish Army, a participant in the war of 1920. Karol's brother Edmund, who was 14 years older, became a doctor. At the age of 26, he was infected with scarlet fever and died. 'My boyhood and youthful years,' recalled the Pope, 'were associated primarily with the figure of my father, whose spiritual life deepened greatly after the terrible loss of his wife and elder son. I looked closely at his life, I saw how much he would demand from himself, I saw him kneel to pray.'

In September 1930, Karol Wojtyła began his studies at the Marcin Wadowita State High School for Boys in Wadowice. He was a very good student. Particular emphasis was placed on the study of language and Polish literature as well as history. He then began performing for the school theatre. His interest in acting led him to undertake Polish studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University in 1938.

The outbreak of World War II became a turning point for Karol Wojtyła, as for many other Poles of his generation. 'The day of 1 September 1939 particularly stuck in my mind. It was the first Friday of the month,' he recalled. 'I came to Wawel to confess. The cathedral was empty. It was probably the last time I could enter it freely. It was later closed, and the royal castle in Wawel became the seat of General Governor Hans Frank.' After the arrest of the professors and the closure of the university, the young student, in order to avoid deportation to forced labour in the Third Reich, first worked in 1940 in a quarry associated with the Cracow chemical factory Solvay and later in a water purification plant. He described his experiences from this place in one of the poems:

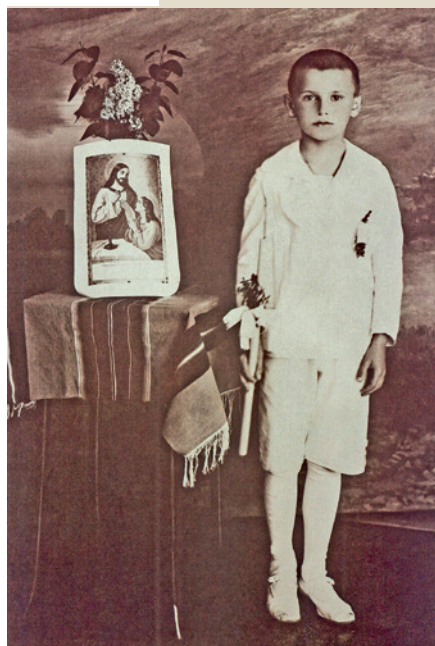
... and in me the thought is growing, it grows day by day, that all the greatness of this work is inside of man.

A hard, cracked palm otherwise rises up,

The human thought dissolves differently in stone—When you release the human energies from the forces of the stone and cut in the right place—an artery full of blood.

John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, Cracow 1996

At the end of 1940, Karol was sworn in as a member of the underground Christian Democratic Union. On 18 February 1941, his father died after a long illness. In the autumn of 1941, Mieczysław Kotlarkowski founded the Rhapsodic Theatre in Cracow, which put on plays in private homes. In the inaugural performance *The Spirit King* by Juliusz Słowacki Karol played the King Bolesław Śmiały. At that time, his vocation for the clergy also matured. He entered the secret Metropolitan Seminary in Cracow in the autumn of 1942. At the same time, he took up studies at the underground Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University. He worked, passed subsequent exams and got to know his spiritual guides, including Archbishop Adam S. Sapieha and Father Jan Piwowarczyk, one of the most prominent priests associated with the Christian-Democratic circles.



Karol Wojtyła on the day of his First Holy Communion, Wadowice, May 1929.

Photo: Laski Diffusion/East News

Life in the priesthood

After the occupation of Cracow by the Red Army, in January 1945 Karol Wojtyła resumed his seminary studies and continued his theological studies at the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University. He was also involved in social work. He became the vice-president of the Brotherly Help (Polish: *Bratnia Pomoc*). In this capacity, he became one of the people responsible for the course of the great patriotic demonstration of academics on 3 May 1946, during which a brutal attack of law enforcement agencies took place along with the subsequent arrest of selected students by the Security Office. At that time, Karol Wojtyła, a reverend and student at the Jagiellonian University, was first noticed by the security police. In the same year, on All Saints' Day, Karol Wojtyła was ordained as a priest by Cardinal Adam S. Sapieha. At the end of November he went to Rome to continue his studies at the Dominican Department of the Theological Faculty of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas of Aquinas (Angelicum). The haste was, as it turned out, justified, because as early as next year, the state authorities stopped issuing permits for travels to young priests and clerics allowing them to study in the Vatican.

In Rome, Karol Wojtyła lived in the Belgium College. 'I attended lectures at the Angelicum, stopping by the Jesuit Church of Saint Andrew's at the Quirinal, housing the relics of St. Stanislaw

Father Karol Wojtyła as a vicar in his first parish in Niegowić, 1949.



Photo: Loski Diffusion/East News

Kostka,' the young priest wrote. 'I remember that among the visitors to his grave there were many Germanicum seminarians, who could be easily recognized by their red cassocks.'

In the heart of Christianity and in the light of the tradition of saints, nations met and, rising above the tragedy of war that had deeply touched us, we saw the beginning of a united world.' Remaining abroad, while communism in Poland was already wreaking havoc on the minds of the nation, had a very positive effect on the young priest, stimulating his natural talents, including artistic and linguistic ones. In the summer he visited Western Europe with its great Christian heritage. He met, for example, the priest of the Polish Catholic Mission in Charleroi in Belgium, and learned of the problems that the Church was experiencing at that time, such as the issue of worker priests in France. After two years of studies, in 1948 crowned with the title of doctor of theology for his work devoted to the issues of faith in the works of Saint John of the Cross, Karol Wojtyła returned to his country. In 1949, after a few months of ministry in the parish in Niegowic, he was transferred to the parish of St. Florian in Cracow, where he carried out pastoral care of doctors and academics (with breaks, until 1958). Over the years, he travelled with students to the mountains and off the beaten track, and inspired by one of them—Jerzy Ciesielski—he rowed on the Masurian lakes.

The young priest was also developing academically. In 1953 he received a postdoctoral degree and the title of Associate Professor of the Faculty of Theology at the Jagiellonian University. After the liquidation of the faculty in 1954, he transferred to the Catholic University of Lublin, where in time another group of his students was formed. He taught, educated and wrote articles, poems, dramas and more major works, such as *Love and Responsibility* published in 1960. The bibliography of his academic works until 1978 includes 435 items.



Photo: Laski Diffusion/East News

Father Karol Wojtyła, called by the youth 'Uncle', during a canoeing trip to Masuria, 1950s.

Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal

Due to his activity in many circles, Wojtyła quickly became an object of interest for the Security Service. The Security Service collected detailed information, among others, about his secular friends (Wanda and Andrzej Póttawski, Irena Kinaszewska and others), his views, and even living conditions. 'How often does he shave and what cosmetics does he use, or does he carry some documents from home to the office, at what time does he have lunch, in whose company ...' – these are just some of the issues investigated by the secret police in Cracow at the end of the sixties which were discussed with the network of secret collaborators observing Wojtyła. During the two decades of his priestly life in the People's Republic of Poland (1958-1978) a large group of security agents focused on him and the circle of the Cracow Catholic Intellectual Club and 'Tygodnik Powszechny' with which he was associated—including, among others, a priest named Władysław Kulczycki ('Żagielowski', and other aliases) and Tadeusz Nowak ('Ares'), including a curia employee and a long-time administrative director of the Social Publishing Institute 'Znak'.

The surveillance of Karol Wojtyła grew as his career soared. On 4 July 1958, at the age of 38, he was appointed the youngest bishop of the Archdiocese of Cracow in the Polish Episco-

Archbishop, metropolitan of Cracow Karol Wojtyła at the millennium celebrations in Tum, 11 June 1967.





Cracow Metropolitan Archbishop Karol Wojtyła receives the cardinal's hat from Pope Paul VI, the Vatican, 28 June 1967.

pate. Due to the increasingly visible weaknesses of the current metropolitan administrator, Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak, he in fact took over most of the duties of the Ordinary. After the archbishop's death on 16 July 1962, he was appointed vicar of the Capitular of the Metropolis, and then at the end of 1963—Archbishop, Metropolitan of Cracow. In 1967, at the age of 47, he received a cardinal's hat from Pope Paul VI. From the beginning of his episcopal path he accepted a fragment of the prayer to the Mother of God 'Totus tuus' as a motto: 'I am all yours and all that is mine belongs to you. I receive you with my whole being. Give me your heart, Mary.'

The obtaining of new titles was the result of hard work. Being a metropolitan, he participated in the works of the Second Vatican Council. He spoke many times, including twice during the plenary sessions. He also prepared some of his speeches and postulates in a written form. They mainly concerned the Scheme on Revelation Sources, the third chapter of the Scheme on the Holy Liturgy, the Scheme on Mass Media, the ecumenism and the apostolate of the laity in the Church. 'John Paul II was a man of the Council. He drew from its teachings, marking out the guiding lines of life and the mission of the Church,' recalled Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, long-time secretary of the Pope and witness to his pontificate. 'Referring to the Council, he gradually introduced into the ecclesiastical reality the concept of Church-communion, or as he used to say Church-family. [...] He managed to introduce

Primate Stefan Wyszyński
and Cardinal
Karol Wojtyła, Fiszor,
August 1978.



Photo: Laski Diffusion/East News

the charismatic, secular and community elements alongside with institutional, clerical and hierarchical aspects.’ The first fruits of the Council’s teachings were already visible in the Cracow metropolis in the 1970s. Guided by concern for the inclusion of the laity in the work of evangelisation, the Metropolitan of Cracow conducted the Pastoral Synod of the Archdiocese of Cracow (completed in 1979) and the Provincial Synod of the Cracow Metropolis (completed during the second pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland in June 1983), whose goal—as Fr. prof. Józef Marecki wrote – ‘was a quest for new pastoral methods and pastoral models that would not deny the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.’

Archbishop Karol Wojtyła supported Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the Great Novena work and the millennium celebrations of 1966 in Cracow and other dioceses. As he belonged to the primate’s closest associates, the communist authorities tried to instigate a dispute between them. Attempts were made to use natural differences of opinion arising between those among the laity, including the editorial office of the Warsaw ‘Więź’ and the Cracow Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK), who opted for the so-called Open Church, and the Christian Democratic-national circles in the laity and the leadership of the Polish Episcopate, whose priority was the Catholic condition of the entire nation in the circumstances of ongoing indoctrination on the part of the Marxists and the atheist state. In this discussion, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła remained a faithful ally of the Primate Stefan Wyszyński. During joint meetings of

ecclesiastical commissions (the Cardinal, among others, sat in or chaired the Marian Commission, Catholic Education Commission and Commission for the Lay Apostolate), the Main Council (the cardinal was the vice-chairman) and the Polish Episcopate conference they supported each other. They were united by their faith in God, Marianism and knowledge of a system which, in their opinion, deprived the Poles and did not serve them.

Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was well aware that the mission of the Church in communist Poland was to lead the nation through a difficult period of attack on its Christian culture. He first engaged in the defence of the cross in Cracow's Nowa Huta, and then in a twenty-year battle to build a temple for the – as Stalinist planners wanted – 'Godless' workers who lived there. 'It was he who, in times of shepherding the church in Cracow, stubbornly visited the construction sites of the Nowa Huta temples, where he worshiped on frozen and snowy nights, at midnight altars and at dawn on Easter mornings, he led resurrection processions—first on the construction sites of the church in Bieńczyce, then in Mistrzejowice and on Krzesławice Hills,' recalled Jan L. Franczyk. He also supported the laity from the 'Oasis movement' of Fr. Franciszek Blachnicki, through those fighting for historical memory (e.g. Adam Macedoński and his Katyń Institute), to representatives of the pre-August opposition. As a man firmly rooted in the Polish tradition, he did not have a complex of parochialism or peripherality. He was an intellectual. Thanks to extensive contacts in the universal Church and knowledge of foreign languages, he was perfectly prepared to take its highest position.

One of the most important fields of cooperation between the Primate of Poland and Cardinal Wojtyła was their critical evaluation of the diplomacy of the Holy See (the so-called *Ostpolitik*), led by Archbishop Agostino Casaroli against the Soviet bloc. At the beginning of 1974 during the meeting of the Main Council of the Polish Episcopate, referring to the pressure of Vatican diplomacy on the Primate of Poland to become an advocate of establishing diplomatic relations between the Polish People's Republic and the Holy See, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła said: 'Polish identity has a homogeneous history. The government and the party do not represent it. This reality does not fit into the spiritual identity of the nation. A society, oriented towards this reality critically, fears that the agreement between the state, that is, the party, and the Holy See, would be tantamount to sanctioning this political reality on which people have formed an opinion within the last thirty years'.



Photo: Sipa Press/East News

The first meeting of John Paul II with the faithful gathered on St. Peter Square in the Vatican, 16 October 1978.

Turning point

In the Polish Church, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła remained in the shadow of the Primate of the Millennium. In the universal Church, however, he was recognizable and enjoyed great popularity. This was confirmed by the conclave after the sudden death of Pope John Paul I, in October 1978. In the eighth vote, the cardinal from Cracow received 99 votes out of a possible 111. 'If they choose you, please do not say no.' 'The Primate of the Millennium helped me so much,' the Pope remembered the words of the Cardinal during the closed conclave, 'I could answer the question posed after the election: I accept'. On 16 October after the words of Cardinal Pericle Felici 'Habemus Papam', Karol Wojtyła, taking the name of John Paul II, appeared—as the first non-Italian Pope since 1522—on the balcony of the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican. He immediately established good contact with a large crowd of the faithful. For the first time in many decades, Poland and its Catholic nation once again became a topic of interest for the whole world.

When the news of the election of Karol Wojtyła as Pope reached Poland, the general enthusiasm, joy and surprise of the nation mixed with the confusion and panic of the communist authorities.

The party (PZPR) leaders were confounded. They had not expected a Pole to be chosen as the Pope. John Paul II marked his pontificate with grandness from the very beginning, encouraging the faithful not to abstain from accepting Christ. 'Do not be afraid,' he cried. This call turned out to be resonant and creative in the perspective of the renewal of every human being, as well as nations and the world.

On 22 October 1978, the inauguration of the pontificate took place in Rome, also joined—in addition to the cardinals and faithful—by delegations of many countries in the world. During a memorable homage—which was later recorded on the monument standing in the courtyard of the Catholic University of Lublin—the Pope rose from his throne to lift the 78-year-old cardinal Stefan Wyszyński from his knees and kiss his hand. In the history of the Polish People's Republic, a new chapter in the Church-state relations also began. The Pope intended to make a pilgrimage to his homeland as soon as in May 1979, on the 900th anniversary of the martyr's death of the patron saint of Poland, Saint Stanislaus; he prepared the faithful of the Cracow metropolis for these celebrations. After lengthy negotiations between the communist apparatus led by Gierek, the Holy See and the Polish Episcopate on 2 June 1979, John Paul II landed Warsaw airport and kissed his native land. 'Poland's great days begin today,' noted the Primate of Poland in his journal (*Zapiski*). For the first time in history, the 'Iron Curtain', supporting the atheist rule, had to give way to the leaders of the universal Church. The Pope's words uttered on Victory Square in Warsaw – 'Let Your Spirit descend! Let Your Spirit descend! And renew the face of the earth. This earth'—constituted the beginning of Poland's road to 'Solidarity' and independence.

The nation rose from its knees, it was said. Even the wiser representatives of the authorities were aware, contrary to the 'propaganda of success', that the first pilgrimage of John Paul II to the country was an unprecedented challenge for the authorities. Jan Szczepański, a member of the State Council, just after the Pope's departure, wrote to the highest party and state authorities: 'Because in the extreme form one can suppose that what happened is that the party ceases to be a political alternative to



John Paul II leaves the plane after landing at the airport in Warsaw's Okęcie during his first pilgrimage to Poland. Behind him: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Archbishop Agostino Casarola, secretary of the Pope, Fr. Stanisław Dziwisz and photographer Arturo Mari, 2 June 1979.



During the first pilgrimage to Poland, John Paul II enters the market of his hometown, Wadowice, on 7 June 1979.

John Paul II arrives at the Yankee stadium, greeting the faithful, New York, 4 October 1979.

Poles outside the Church and either it creates an alternative for them or loses support for the Church. [...] Further—Marxism ceases to be an alternative to religion—so propaganda strategists and human soul engineers have something to think about!

The first years of the pontificate were mainly marked by Polish affairs, but the Pope also solved many of the current issues bothering Catholics around the world. The most important were, among others, addressing the ‘theology of liberation’, ‘the Lefebvrists’, and also maintaining the neutrality of the Holy See in the Falklands war. Papal pilgrimages covering all continents were the key to the new evangelization of the nations affected by the secularization or those subjected to anti-Christian repression. There, John Paul II met mainly with an extensive crowd of believers who reacted vivaciously – with applause and singing – to his words and gestures. Above the diplomacy of the Holy See, the image of the Pilgrim Pope was built, before whom no one (except Orthodox Russia) closed the door. ‘Open the door to Christ’ – cried John Paul II more and more effectively.



For: Library of Congress

Polish Pope (1979-1989)

From the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II emphasized his connections with the broadly understood Slavdom, including the persecuted Church in Lithuania and the Greek Catholic Church, unrecognized by the Soviets, with the Rome – based Archbishop Józef Ślipyj at the helm (the Pope received him in the first month of his pontificate). John Paul II became a symbol of opposition to communism and of every man's concern for the right to freedom. His portrait accompanied the shipyard workers during strikes on the Coast in the summer of 1980. In a letter sent on 20 August to Cardinal Wyszyński, he wrote: 'I pray that once again the Episcopate with the Primate in the forefront [...] could help the nation in its struggle for daily bread, social justice and in defence of its inviolable rights to life and development.' In January 1981, during a special audience, he received a delegation from the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarity', which included, among others, Lech Wałęsa and Anna Walentynowicz. He prayed for Poland in public many times. He often discussed the subject of democratic changes on the international arena.

Fearing the loss of domination in Central and Eastern Europe, the authorities in the Kremlin in autumn 1979, it seems, decided to prepare an assassination attempt on the Holy Father. In 1980, Major of the KGB Vladimir Kuzichkin, an employee of the Soviet Embassy in Tehran, met with Turkish terrorist Ali Ağca. Most likely, he ordered him to assassinate the Pope and sent him to Sofia, where he was to receive help from the local special services who were – as Ağca claimed – 'under the total operational control of the KGB.' According to the plan prepared with Ali Ağca by the Bulgarian residents of the special services in Rome: Todor S. Ajvazov, Zeliu K. Vasilev and Sergey I. Antonov (the only one who was temporarily brought before the Italian court) on 13 May 1981 at 5 p.m., when the pope mobile entered St. Peter's Square, at least two shots were fired in the direction of John Paul II from a semi-automatic 9 mm browning pistol. The Pope, shot in the abdomen, fell into the arms of Fr. Stanisław Dziwisz. He remained conscious. He prayed while the car drove through the streets of Rome to the Gemelli Clinic. As the Pope's biographer wrote about his wounds: 'The colon was perforated, there were also five small

wounds in the small intestine.’ The operation, completed successfully, lasted about five hours. However, due to various complications, only on 24 June 1981 did the doctors report that the ‘overall health [of the patient] shows signs of gradual improvement.’ Meanwhile, the news of the assassination attempt spread around the world. The faithful began to pray fervently for the return of John Paul II to health. Ali Agca was captured on the spot, tried on 22 July 1981, and sentenced to life imprisonment. After his release from prison in 2000, he was transferred to Turkey. There he was punished for other crimes he committed. In 1982 in Fatima, John Paul II thanked the Mother of God for saving his life. Soon after the assassination attempt, at the end of May 1981, the Primate of the Millennium died.

After returning to health, on 7 October 1981, the Pope opened the Polish House under his name in Rome at via Cassia. Crowds of pilgrims from Poland came. It was a gift from the Polish community abroad, mainly from America. In turn, on 8 December 1981, upon the initiative of Pope John Paul II, the Pontifical Theological Academy, the successor of the Theological Faculty of the Jagiellonian University, where he studied, was established in Cracow. During his travels, John Paul II always found time to meet fellow countrymen scattered around the world.

When on 13 December 1981 martial law was introduced in Poland, the Pope immediately appealed: ‘Polish blood cannot be shed, because too much of it has already flowed, especially

The attack on John Paul II
on St. Peter’s Square
in Rome, 13 May 1981.



Photo: AFP/East News



Meeting of John Paul II
with general
Wojciech Jaruzelski,
Warsaw, 17 June 1983.

during the last war.' He supported the position of the new Primate, Archbishop Józef Glemp (whom he raised to the cardinal's dignity in 1983). The news from his country pained him greatly. He could not come to Poland in 1982 to take part in the sixth centenary of the miraculous painting of Our Lady of Częstochowa, which had been undergoing preparations for a long time in Jasna Góra. He only came to the country in June 1983, when he managed to negotiate the promise of the abolition of martial law. His meeting with the Poles was called a pilgrimage of hope. During his homily, he repeatedly referred to 'Solidarity', also making the authorities aware that the idea of this suppressed social movement had his support. In his beloved Tatras (in the Chochołowska Valley), where he still travelled as a metropolitan and cardinal, he met Lech Wałęsa and his family. During the official conversations of the Pope with Gen. Jaruzelski, the latter behaved very shakily. The visits of John Paul II were full of reflection, religious thought, but also spontaneity. Homilies were interrupted with thunderous applause and chanting 'one hundred years, one hundred years'. The Pope answered: 'Maybe it's better not to wait a hundred years, but speak straight away!' His dialogues with young people, standing for hours at the Cracow window near Franciszkańska street, have gone down in history: 'Stay with us!' 'Stay with us!' the Holy Father repeatedly jokingly. 'I am already an old Pope, I have already been one for five years. I won't let you work me like I did during my last visit, when I was still very young. Today, this old Pope must go to sleep.' These eight days of the Pope's stay in Poland gave the nation hope.

Pope John Paul II
and President of the
United States
Ronald Reagan, Alaska,
2 May 1984.



Photo: Ronald Reagan's Presidential Library

The Party leaders were also aware of the authority and strength of John Paul II. According to their promise, they abolished martial law. Their conflict with the Church in Poland, however, flared up again. One of their victims was a priest—father Jerzy Popiełuszko, at whose tomb John Paul II prayed in 1987 during his third pilgrimage. At that time, the declining regime agreed that John Paul II would visit Szczecin and Gdańsk—the cradle of ‘Solidarity’. The central point of the pilgrimage was the meeting of the Pope in Gdańsk Zaspka with a million people, including representatives of ‘Solidarity’. White and red flags fluttered above the heads of the crowds, banners of ‘Solidarity’ and many outstretched hands swayed, making the ‘V’ for victory sign. In turn, at nearby Westerplatte, John Paul II met with some young people. ‘Each of you, young friends, also finds some Westerplatte in your life. Some dimension of duty that you must undertake and fulfil. Some cause

Pope John Paul II
prays at the grave
of priest
Jerzy Popiełuszko
in the courtyard
of the church of
St. Stanisław Kostka
in Żoliborz
in Warsaw, June 1987.



Photo: Maciej Macierzyński/Reporter

that you must fight for. A duty, a duty that you cannot evade. You cannot desert. Finally – some truths and values that need to be maintained and defended, just like Westerplatte, in and around itself. Yes, to defend – for yourself and for others,’ he said. The Pope’s third pilgrimage to Poland was the most politicized. The authorities intended to convince the Holy Father that the Holy See should establish diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of Poland. The Pope, in turn, pressed the authorities to engage in a dialogue with the nation without preconditions. Just as the first papal pilgrimage opened the way to the emergence of ‘Solidarity’, the third visit accelerated the decision of the authorities to undertake talks at the round table, which in turn initiated the process of Poland regaining its independence. The Pope revived the nation, again praying in public for the legacy of ‘Solidarity’. In the end, he proved that the system was rotten and the people that belonged to it had nothing to offer. The authorities understood this too, and in 1989 they sat down to talk with ‘Solidarity’.

A Pope for the world

Pope John Paul II again connected the ‘two lungs’ of Europe, contributing significantly to the disintegration of the Iron Curtain. He established new patrons of the Old Continent: Saint Cyril and Methodius (1980) and Saint Edith Stein (1999). He beatified 1338 people, among them victims of communist terror during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. He canonized 482 people, mainly martyrs from the 20th century, the victims of two totalitarian regimes (in Poland in 1999 he raised 108 blessed people; in total he canonized nine Poles who had previously been blessed: Maksymilian Kolbe, Brother Albert Chmielowski, Rafał Kalinowski, Queen Jadwiga, Jan of Dukla, Kinga, Faustyna Kowalska, Józef Pelczar and Urszula Ledóchowska). Creating a canon of holiness, potentially available to every Christian, he presented priests, religious and secular sisters from around the world. He pointed to the universal call of man to holiness, and at the same time, in the spirit of Christian truth, he restored a stable relativism based on truth, beauty and love to the unstable cognitive relativism of mankind. ‘The materialistic and consumer civilization,’ the Pope

said about the family, the natural environment of shaping love, 'bursts into this great whole of conjugal and parental love and empties it from that profoundly human content which from the very beginning was permeated with the Divine Sign and Reflex. Dear young friends! Do not let this wealth be taken away from you.'

The culmination of the papal mission as the task of saving the world from the victory of the 'civilization of death' over the 'civilization of life, from conception to natural death' was to extend the current rosary with new mysteries of light regarding Jesus' public life and the Act of the World of Divine Mercy made in August 2002 in Cracow's Łagiewniki. 'The message of God's mercy has always been dear to me. History seems to have inscribed it in the tragic experience of the Second World War. In these difficult years, it was a special support and an inexhaustible source of hope not only for Cracovians, but for the whole nation. It was also my personal experience which I took with me to the Holy See and which, in a way, shapes the image of this pontificate,' said the Pope at the time, thus defining the meaning of his life and teaching.

His ministry, however, had many dimensions. He made pilgrimages with the universal message of the Good News about Christ the Saviour, while respecting the individual achievements of each community (even through the gestures of establishing regional costumes, whether it

The pope in the mountains,
Spain, 21 August 1989.

was a hat in Mexico, or Indian plume, or flowers in Papua New Guinea). In 1985, he introduced the World Youth Day, thanks to which he established great contact with young people which lasted throughout his life. 'The Pope helped them to discover the potential of the love for Christ, the joy of being young, being a Christian,' recalled his secretary of the meetings between Pope John Paul II and young people, 'In this way he freed them from the complex of being a Christian, just as he tried to free the Catholic world from the complex leading to living the faith in the sacristies.' The Pope received innumerable delegations of the faithful during his weekly, Wednesday meetings at St. Peter's Square as well as Castel Gandolfo. He could, like no one before, ennoble human works inscribed in the multicoloured culture of nations, inviting artists, sportsmen, eminent scientists and painters, filmmakers (e.g. Andrzej Wajda), hip-hop singers, Bob Dylan or reciters of classical poetry (including Danuta Michałowska from the Rhapsodic Theatre) to the Vatican. As an academic, he participated in seminars. His sporting passions and love for nature united the church with people who were far from Christ. The Pope's acting skills and media talent resulted in a permanent presence in the public sphere as an undisputed authority. He spoke at the UN forum and in national parliaments (in Poland during the pilgrimage in 1999). In June 1980, at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, he said:





John Paul II prays at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, 26 March 2000.

'Man lives a truly human life thanks to culture. [...] I am the son of a nation that has survived the most terrible experiences of history, which its neighbours repeatedly condemned to death, and yet remained alive, and remained itself. It kept its own identity and kept its own sovereignty among the partitions and occupation as a nation—not based on any other means of physical power, but only on the basis of its own culture, which in this case proved to be a power greater than those powers.'

The pontificate of John Paul II was marked by the implementation of the provisions of the Second Vatican Council, which was evident not only in the numerous references to the conciliar documents in papal encyclicals, but also in the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue he consistently conducted. Full of Christian humility, he broke many barriers. For example, he shared a prayer with the Patriarch of Bucharest Teoctist, who called his Catholicism 'deceptive heresy'. In August 1985 he gave a speech to thousands of Muslims in Casablanca, and in October 1986 he invited 'brothers Christians and superiors of the world's great religions to Assisi, so that,' as he said at the time, 'each of us would pray for peace together with others, not against others.' After many years, he mentioned: 'We have been spared the world war whose spectrum was drawn on the horizon.' According to the experts of the pontificate of John Paul II, his decision to organize the ceremony in Assisi was most courageous. 'It has never happened before that representatives of all religions gather together to beg God for peace,' said the Pope to Stanisław Dziwisz immediately after the celebrations.

John Paul II in a special way contributed to the upbringing of Christians in a spirit of respect to the followers of Judaism and the Jewish people. In 2000 he made a historic pilgrimage to the Holy Land, during which he visited the Yad Vashem Institute and prayed in front of the Jerusalem Wailing Wall. 'On the occasion of my apostolic journeys, I always try to meet with representatives of Jewish communities around the world. But for me the visit was certainly a unique experience in the Roman synagogue', said the Pope.

During the pontificate of John Paul II there were important changes in the internal life of the Catholic Church: reformation of the Vatican curia, introduction of 232 new cardinals to the college during nine congratulators, the preparation of more important documents, such as the new Catechism of the Catholic Church (from 1992) or the *Dominus Iesus* declaration.

The words of the Primate of the Millennium from the beginning of the pontificate on the introduction of the Church in the

On Holy Thursday Pope John Paul II washes the feet of the twelve priests in remembrance of Jesus' gesture to the twelve apostles, the Vatican, 20 April 2000.



Photo: AFP/East News

new millennium by the Polish Pope turned out to be prophetic in the Jubilee Year 2000. On Christmas Eve 1999, John Paul II opened the Holy Door to the Basilica of Saint Peter as a sign of a 'new spring in Christian life', in the Great Post he conducted a jubilee examination of conscience in the Catholic Church as part of the Day of Forgiveness, then in June he participated in the International Eucharistic Congress in Rome, and on 6 January 2001, he celebrated his apostolic letter *Novo millennio Ineunte*. He met with representatives of religious and secular communities from around the world at that time—such as Karekin II Catholicos of All Armenians on the 1700th anniversary of the baptism of Armenia, as well as with the congregation representing all social classes, including the homeless and the poor, prisoners and politicians.

Illness and death

From 1992, John Paul II suffered from Parkinson's disease and spent the last years of his ministry in a sitting position. His secretary, priest Stanisław Dziwisz, said that even before the Jubilee Year the Pope wondered whether he should resign. 'He came to the conclusion that one should submit to the will of God, and thus remain as long as the Lord wills it,' Dziwisz recalled. 'God called me and God will call me back, in the form in which he wishes,' the Pope would say. The whole world followed the dramatic moments of the last stage of his earthly life, as after another operation, in March 2005, in relentless suffering, he was unable to speak a word to the faithful from his Vatican window. On 1 April 2005, John Paul II's health deteriorated further. The messages flowing from the Vatican were unambiguous. The Pope was passing away cheerfully – said Cardinal Andrzej M. Deskur on the eve of his death. The same evening over 60,000 believers, mainly young people, gathered in St. Peter's Square. 'I have been looking for you, now you have come to me and I thank you for that', said John Paul II a few hours before his death. These words were a message addressed to everyone who identified with the generation of John Paul II. The vigil in the square lasted for the following

John Paul II's memorial service concelebrated under the direction of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in front of the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, 8 April 2005.



hours and also expanded to include the whole of Poland, and via the media it reached almost the entire world. The Pope died on 2 April 2005 at 9:37 p.m. News of his death was delivered to the faithful gathered in St. Peter Square, which met with both sobbing and applause, expressing their respect. Over the following days, the world mourned his departure, the return to the Father's house – as Archbishop Leonardo Sandri said. The funeral ceremony, which took place on 8 April 2005, was chaired by Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI. In St Peter's square it was attended by around 300,000 people. *Santo subito* resounded throughout the Universal Church. The call resounded for the following years until the end of the beatification and later canonization process of John Paul II in April 2011. The Pope was proclaimed a saint by Pope Francis on 27 April 2014. His grave, located in the grottoes of the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, welcomes pilgrimages of successive generations of believers, seekers and non-believers.

Instead of an epilogue

The pontificate of the Polish Pope was one of the longest in the history of the papacy. It lasted almost 27 years. At that time, Pope John Paul II once or several times visited a total of 132 countries and about 900 towns, giving over 2,400 speeches. He left a huge legacy, including 14 encyclicals, 14 exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions, 43 apostolic letters, addressed to selected circles and to all humanity. Many of his extraordinary thoughts resulting from prayer are still valid, including this on 19 November 1980 about love for the Creator: 'Without entrusting to God, death is stripped of all consolation. For, according to His will, the meaning of death consists in letting us, at this important moment in our life, completely trust in His love, without any other guarantees except just this one—His love.' Saint John Paul II left the universal Church richer with the experience of his great pontificate, and gave Poles a heritage, which over the following years was popularized with numerous books, exhibitions and theological and historical conferences. The following were created in Warsaw: The Centre for Thought of John Paul II and the Museum of John Paul II and Primate Wyszyński. In Wadowice the Museum of the Family Home of John Paul II, its daily mission being to disseminate the teaching of the Polish Pope, was founded. In 2000, the Polish Episcopate Conference established the New Millennium Work Foundation, which in addition to popularizing papal thought, provides material support to young people from small towns and villages.

Both in the life of the Holy Father and after his death, numerous monuments were devoted to him throughout the world. In many temples, not only those which he reached during his pontificate, there are plaques commemorating him. In Poland, there is no major city without a street, avenue or a roundabout bearing his name.



Photo: Ropi Photo/Reporter

Pope John Paul II in the window of his apartment at the Apostolic Palace in Rome, 30 February 2005.

Text
Jan Żaryn

Technical Editor
Sławomir Gajda

Graphic design
and typesetting
Sylvia Szafrńska

On the cover:
The picture made
on 20th August 1991
in Budapest,
Heroes Square,
Attila Kovács
(Hungarian News Agency).

Printing
CENTRUM POLIGRAFII Sp. z o.o.
ul. Łopuszańska 53
02-232 Warszawa

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Narodowej – Komisja Ścigania
Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi
Polskiemu, 2018

ISBN 978-83-8098-486-8

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'Yes, you need to teach freedom, you need mature freedom. Only on such a basis can society, the nation, and all areas of its life be founded. We cannot create fictitious freedom which supposedly liberates man but, in fact, enslaves and depraves him. At the beginning of the Third Polish Republic it is necessary to carry out an examination of conscience in this respect. I am probably saying this as this Polish soil is my mother! This Homeland is my mother! These are my brothers and sisters! And please understand, all of you who take these matters lightly, please understand that I care deeply about these matters and I can be hurt by them! You should also feel hurt! It is much easier to destroy, than to rebuild. This destruction has lasted for too long! The process of intensified rebuilding is vital! You cannot continue this reckless destruction!'

John Paul II, Masłów near Kielce; 3 June 1991

40 years have passed since 16 October 1978, when the son of our land, today Saint John Paul II, took his post at the Vatican. His pontificate, begun with the words 'Do not be afraid ...', brought hope to millions and contributed to the emergence of „Solidarity” as well as the fall of communism and the Soviet Union.

He often emphasized that he owed his spiritual formation mainly to 'Polish culture, Polish literature, Polish music, art, theatre – Polish history, Polish Christian traditions, Polish schools, Polish universities'. On numerous occasions, he spoke about the debt owed to Polish heritage, to past generations, to their suffering, sacrifices and the fruit of their work. It is thanks to them that we have managed to survive and continue to be a nation at the crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe – a continent from which we not only benefited, but also shaped – 'not seldom at the price of our suffering'. Today's Europe has plunged into a spiritual crisis, rejecting its rich heritage.

Apart from Poles, John Paul II also called upon Europe to return to the path of rebirth: 'Find yourself! Be yourself! Discover your beginnings. Bring life to your roots. Breathe life into the authentic values that made your history glorious, and your presence on other continents beneficial ...' Some are slowly returning to this once-explored and well-marked trail.

Let this publication of the Institute of National Remembrance be an opportunity to recount the works and thoughts of John Paul II not only to Poles, but, above all, to nearer and further neighbors and all nations to whom he tirelessly made pilgrimages, always emphasizing the richness of their culture and history.

President of the Institute of National Remembrance
Jarosław Szarek



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PISMO O NAJNOWSZEJ HISTORII POLSKI