

Pope Saint John Paul II

- Feastday: October 22
- Patron Saint of: World Youth Day (Co- Patron)
- Birth: May 18, 1920
- Death: April 2, 2005
- Canonized: by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014



"Only in Christ do we find real love, and the fullness of life. And so I invite you today to look to Christ. When you wonder about the mystery of yourself, look to Christ who gives you the meaning of life."

John Paul II was born Karol Wojtyła in a small city near Cracow, Poland. He lost his mother and older brother at a young age and was raised mainly by his father.

He made his First Holy Communion at age 9 and was confirmed at 18. Upon graduation from high school, he enrolled in a school for drama. But when Nazi occupation forced the university to close, young Karol had to work in a quarry and chemical factory to earn his living and to avoid being deported to Germany.

In 1942, aware of his call to the priesthood, he began courses in the clandestine seminary of Cracow. After the Second World War, he continued his studies until his priestly ordination in 1946. Later he became a professor of moral philosophy and social ethics in the major seminary of Cracow and lectured for 25 years.

In 1958, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Cracow. From there, he was made a cardinal in 1967. Cardinal Wojtyła was elected Pope on October 16, 1978, and took the name John Paul II. He was the 263rd successor to Peter and had one of the longest pontificates, lasting nearly 27 years.

On May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul II was the victim of an attempted assassination in St. Peter's Square. Shocking the world, he exhibited extraordinary love and forgiveness when he made a personal visit to his attacker, Ali Agca, in Rebibbia Prison.

Pope Saint John Paul II is fondly remembered for many great works during his pontificate, including prolific writings, World Youth Days, pastoral journeys to 129 countries, and the Great Jubilee of 2000.

Suffering from the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease, the Pope neared the end of his life. With hundreds of thousands of young people beneath the window of the papal apartment keeping candlelight vigil during the pope's final agony, John Paul II whispered in response, "I have looked for you and you have come to me. Thank you." Pope John Paul II died during the first vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday, April 2, 2005, at 9:37 p.m., soon after he had uttered his final audible words, "Let me go to my Father's house."