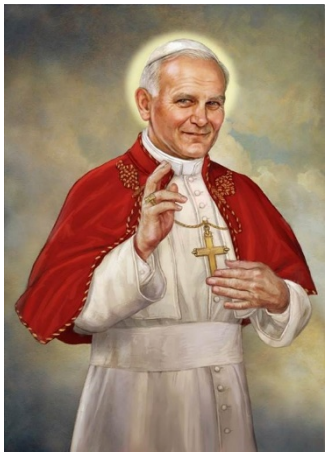
Liturgical Living: Pope Saint John Paul II



Pope Saint John Paul II was born Karol Josef Wojtyla (voy-TIH-wah) in the small Polish town of Wadowice to a faithful Catholic family. Tragically, by the time he was twenty-one, he lost his mother, father, and his older brother.

During the oppressive Nazi occupation of WWII, Karol enrolled in an underground seminary in Krakow and ran a resistance movement of artists. After the war ended, Karol was ordained a priest in 1946.

The Communist regime that occupied Poland after the war kept an eye on the brilliant young priest but underestimated him as a harmless intellectual. Thus, they allowed his appointment as an auxiliary bishop of Krakow in 1958. He was named archbishop of Krakow in 1964, elevated to a cardinal in 1967, and provided leadership to the faithful of Poland as they faced persecution under Communist rule.

In 1978, when Pope John Paul died after 33 days in office, the cardinals gathered once again, and this time, they elected Wojtyla, who took the name John Paul II as a symbol of continuity. He was the first non-Italian elected as Supreme Pontiff in 455 years.

When he stepped out onto the balcony facing St. Peter's Square, his first words were these: "Be not afraid! Open up—no, swing wide the gates to Christ."

In the midst of the trauma of the second half of the twentieth century, there was a deep need for a wise leader to guide the Church and the world. Aided by immense energy and evangelical enthusiasm, John Paul II traveled on apostolic journeys to 124 countries - he traveled to more countries than any other Pope in history.

In order to dialogue with the youngest members of the Church, John Paul II inaugurated the World Youth Day celebrations. A prolific writer and intellect, John Paul II wrote fourteen encyclicals and five books.

In his later years, even though Parkinson's disease made it difficult for him to celebrate Mass and eventually impacted his mobility, John Paul II did not shy from his public pastoral duties. He presented himself to the world as an image of the great humility and dignity of a suffering human being. He died in April 2005.

Here are some ideas for celebrating this feast day:

- Practice how to draw Pope JPII with this guided video.

- Learn about Saint JPII's coat of arms. This website explains the symbols behind each of the different elements. Be sure to translate the page to English!
- Listen to a podcast. For little kids, try this Saint Stories for Kids podcast and for a slightly older crowd try this Saints Alive 3 part podcast or this Catholic Sprouts podcast.
- Read a kid's book about JPII: Lolek, The Boy Who Became Pope John Paul II, The Story of Saint John Paul II or this graphic novel about JPII.
- Read an adult's book about the great contributions JPII made to Catholic marriage and family life: Man and Woman He Created Them or Love and Responsibility.
- Bake this recipe for Papal Cream Cake.

Pope Saint John Paul II, pray for us!