



## SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II Karol Józef Wojtyła



1. The birth name of Pope Saint John Paul II is Karol Józef Wojtyła. He was born May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, Poland.
2. Growing up, he was a great student-athlete. He liked to play soccer, and enjoyed backpacking, skiing, kayaking, and he wanted to have a career as an actor in theater.
3. In 1942, early in World War II, he joined the Church's underground seminary in Kraków. In 1946, he was ordained a priest.
4. When he was 58, he was elected Pope on October 16, 1978.
5. He was the first pope from Poland and also the first non-Italian pope since Pope Adrian VI in 1522.
6. Pope Saint John Paul II spoke eight languages. He learned Spanish in the mid-1940s, for his Ph.D. research, because he wanted to be able to read St. John of the Cross (about whom he wrote his doctoral dissertation) in the original.
7. One of his most important encyclicals, *Laborem Exercens*, was all about the importance of respecting human labor. His guidance inspired the Solidarity free trade union labor movement in Poland in the 1980's, which led to the eventual non-violent downfall of Soviet Communism in Poland first, and later the rest of Europe.
8. He was an advocate for human rights for years. He worked actively to promote world peace and understanding amongst nations and religions.
9. He spoke out against abortion, artificial birth control, and euthanasia. He taught that these go against the teachings of Christ.
10. *Time* magazine named Pope John Paul II the Man of the Year in 1994.
11. Pope Saint John Paul II had Parkinson's disease, but he continued to write books explaining his faith. The best seller, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, a book that answers questions from an Italian journalist.

### Important dates in the life and legacy of Pope Saint John Paul II

- 1920 - Born in Poland on May 18
- 1946 - Ordained a priest
- 1954 - Appointed professor of ethics at Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
- 1964 - Appointed as resident Archbishop of Kraków
- 1978 - Chosen to be Pope of the Roman Catholic Church by the College of Cardinals
- 1981 - Was shot by a would-be assassin on May 13, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima. The bullet is now set inside the crown of the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal.
- 1983 - Met with the would-be assassin but the conversation was confidential
- 2005 - Died on April 2 & thousands of people supported the cause for his sainthood.
- 2011 - Beatified by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, on May 1
- 2013 - Pope Francis approved the cause for his sainthood in July
- 2014 - Pope John Paul II's canonization as a Saint of the Church took place on April 27 together with another great, Pope John XXIII.

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INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT...



POPE SAINT  
JOHN PAUL II  
KAROL JÓZEF WOJTYŁA



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## Questions & Answers About POPE SAINT JOHN PAUL II Karol Józef Wojtyła



**Q: Where was the first place the Pope visited after becoming the Pope?** A: Assisi  
—Pope John Paul II was the most traveled Pope in history.

**Q: What was the nationality of Pope John Paul II?** A: Polish  
—Pope John Paul II was born in Wadowice, Poland. He studied literature and philosophy and was a poet and playwright.

**Q: Prior to John Paul II, from where was the last non-Italian Pope?** A: Utrecht  
—The last non-Italian Pope was Adrian VI. He was born in Utrecht in the Netherlands. He was Pope from 1522-1523.

**Q: Where did the Pope appear for his inauguration?** A: St Peter's Square.

**Q: What happens as soon as the Pope -to-be accepts the position?** A: He is taken to a room called the "Room of Tears" to be fitted with one of three white cassocks. Pope John Paul II was the youngest man to become Pope in over 130 years. He was 58 when elected.

**Q: On what date did the new Holy Father celebrate his Inaugural Mass?** A: 22nd October 1978. The voting process started on 15th October 1978.

**Q: When was Pope John Paul II born?** A: May, 1920.  
—His name was Karol Josef Wojtyla. He was born in Wadowice, Poland on May 18, 1920. His father was a former officer in the Polish army and his mother a former school-teacher.

**Q: Where was an assassination attempt made on Pope John Paul II?** A: St. Peter's Square, Rome. He was shot and seriously wounded as he entered St. Peter's Square in 1981.

**Q: When did Pope John Paul become a priest?** A: 1946.  
—He was ordained a priest in 1946. Pope Paul VI made him a cardinal in 1967.

**Q: On what day in history did John Paul II's papacy begin?** A: October 16th, 1978.  
—This was only two months after John Paul I was elected pope. The previous pontiff's papacy unfortunately only lasted one month before he died in September of 1978.

**Q: What item did Pope John Paul II place in the crown of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima on May 13th, 1982?** A: the bullet used in his assassination attempt.  
—The Pope was shot on the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima. He stayed very devout to her throughout his entire life.

**Q: On which day in history was Pope John Paul II shot?** A: May 13th, 1981.  
—On Wednesday, May 13th, 1981, the Pope went out for his daily audience in St. Peter's Square. A gun was fired by Mehmet Ali Ağca hitting the Pope and sending him to the hospital. It took surgeons five and a half hours to repair the damage to his abdominal cavity, right arm and left hand.

**Q: What Polish City was his birthplace?** A: Wadowice. It's only a few miles from the Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp. He paid many visits to Auschwitz, as well as many other former camps, to pay homage to those who perished there during the Holocaust.

**Q: Pope John Paul II established a new celebration in the 1980s. The first one was held on March 23, 1986. What is it?**

A: World Youth Day. The first World Youth Day was held in Rome. Since then, World Youth Days have been held in 13 different locations around the world including Australia, the United States, Brazil, Philippines, Canada, and Poland



**Q: Which ideology was Pope John Paul II staunchly against?**  
A: Communism.

—During his first visit to Poland he told the people, 'You are men. You have dignity. Don't crawl on your bellies.' He fought with officials for 20 years to get a church built in the Communist-built 'ideal' factory town, Nowa Huta. Many regard his election as Pope to be the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union.

**Q: In 1964, the future Pope John Paul II was appointed as resident Archbishop of which city?** A: Kraków.

—In 1958, he was named a bishop of Kraków and in 1964, he assumed leadership. He often took a public stand against communism and government officials.

**Q: In which river did Pope John Paul II swim in his youth?** A: Skawa.  
—The river was often flooded and it took a great amount of courage to swim it.

**Q: How old was Pope John Paul II when he died?** A: 84. John Paul II died at 9.37 p.m. on Saturday 2nd April 2005. His death was formally announced by the Cardinal Camerlengo (Papal Chamberlain), Eduardo Martinez Somalo, who said in Latin "Vere Papa mortuus est" (the Pope is truly dead). Shortly after this announcement, thousands of pilgrims who gathered in St. Peter's Square were led in prayer by Cardinal Angelo Sodano.

**Q: How many U.S. presidents had a personal audience with Pope John Paul II?**  
A: five. In October 1979 John Paul II became the first-ever pope to visit the White House, where he was received by President Jimmy Carter, who surprised him by greeting him in Polish. Ronald Reagan met John Paul II in June, 1982, and in June, 1987. President George H.W. Bush met the pontiff in November 1991, and President George W. Bush met him in June 2004. President Bill Clinton met John Paul II in June 1994.

**Q: Who tried to assassinate Pope John Paul II on May 13th 1981?**  
A: A fanatical Turkish gunman, Mehmet Ali Ağca, He fired several shots at John Paul II during a public appearance in St. Peter's Square in Rome. The pontiff was hit by four bullets which caused severe wounds. In 1983 he visited his would-be assassin in prison, and prayed with him.