

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint John Paul II

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 22

Saintspedia · saintspedia.com

IN BRIEF

Saint John Paul II

Karol Wojtyła, pope from 1978 to 2005, the first Polish pope in history.

Feast day	October 22
Born	May 18, 1920, Wadowice, Poland
Died	April 2, 2005, Vatican City
Canonized	April 27, 2014, by Pope Francis
Era	21st century
Patron saint of	families, young people

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint John Paul II

Novena to Saint John Paul II

Saint Peter's Basilica and John Paul II's Tomb

Credits and sources

Booklet offered by Saintspedia, the directory of Catholic saints: lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage, at saintspedia.com. Texts written by Saintspedia, except traditional prayers marked as such. Original prayers and novenas are not official liturgical texts. Free booklet, to print and share for personal, family or parish use; please do not sell it.

LIFE

Saint John Paul II

Saint John Paul II, born Karol Wojtyła in Poland in 1920, was pope from 1978 to 2005. The first Polish pope in history and the first non-Italian pope in more than four centuries, he left his mark on his age through his travels across the world, his role in the fall of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, World Youth Day and a vast body of teaching on human dignity, the family and mercy. Canonized on April 27, 2014, he is honored on October 22, the anniversary of the inauguration of his pontificate.

Who was Saint John Paul II?

Karol Józef Wojtyła was born on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, a small town in southern Poland not far from Kraków. His father, also named Karol, was a retired army officer; his mother, Emilia, died in 1929, before he turned nine. His older brother Edmund, a doctor, died in 1932 of an illness caught from his patients, and his father died in 1941. By the age of twenty, Karol had lost all his close family. This early grief, and then the war, help explain his lifelong attention to suffering and to the dignity of every person.

A literature student at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków from 1938, he loved theater, poetry, hiking and skiing. He remained all his life a man of culture, prayer and encounter.

Key dates

- **May 18, 1920**: Born in Wadowice.
- **1940-1944**: Under German occupation, works in a quarry and then a chemical plant, and takes part in an underground theater.
- **November 1, 1946**: Ordained a priest.
- **September 28, 1958**: Ordained auxiliary bishop of Kraków.

- **1964**: Archbishop of Kraków; cardinal in 1967.
- **October 16, 1978**: Elected pope as John Paul II.
- **May 13, 1981**: Seriously wounded by gunfire in Saint Peter's Square.
- **1986**: Visits the Synagogue of Rome and holds a prayer meeting for peace in Assisi.
- **April 2, 2005**: Dies at the Vatican.
- **May 1, 2011**: Beatified by Benedict XVI.
- **April 27, 2014**: Canonized by Pope Francis, together with John XXIII.

A priest and bishop in communist Poland

During the war, the German occupiers closed the university. Karol worked as a laborer, first in a stone quarry, then at the Solvay chemical plant, while secretly studying in the underground seminary of Cardinal Sapieha. Ordained a priest in 1946, he studied in Rome at the Angelicum, writing a thesis on faith in Saint John of the Cross. Back in Poland he served as a parish curate and chaplain to students, taking young people hiking and kayaking, and taught ethics at the Catholic University of Lublin.

Made a bishop at thirty-eight and then Archbishop of Kraków, he stood up patiently to the communist authorities, who, for example, refused to allow churches to be built in the new town of Nowa Huta. He took part in the Second Vatican Council. His episcopal motto, *Totus tuus* ("Totally yours"), addressed to the Virgin Mary, was inspired by Saint Louis de Montfort.



Karol Wojtyła's birthplace in Wadowice, now a museum.

A pope from a faraway country

Elected on October 16, 1978, at the age of fifty-eight, Karol Wojtyła took the name John Paul II in honor of his predecessors John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul I. On October 22, at the Mass inaugurating his pontificate, he issued a call that became famous: "Be not afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!" His pontificate, one of the longest in history, lasted more than twenty-six years.

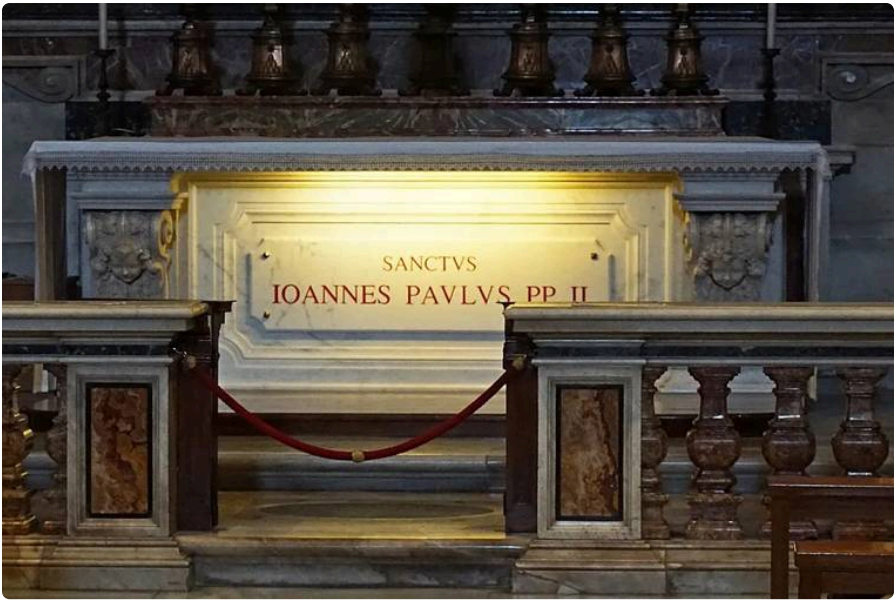
John Paul II made more than a hundred journeys outside Italy. His first return to Poland, in June 1979, gave fresh courage to a whole people and came shortly before the birth of the Solidarity trade union; many historians credit him with a role in the end of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe in 1989. He created World Youth Day, whose first international gathering took place in Buenos Aires in 1987. Later gatherings brought him to Denver in 1993, to Manila in 1995 and to Toronto in 2002.

He published fourteen encyclicals, including *Evangelium vitae* and *Fides et ratio*, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1992. He added the Luminous Mysteries to the Rosary in 2002. He proclaimed a great many saints and blesseds, among them Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Padre Pio and Faustina Kowalska, at whose canonization in 2000 he instituted Divine Mercy Sunday. He also beatified Mother Teresa in 2003.

His pontificate is also the subject of study and debate, especially regarding how certain cases within the Church were handled. Canonization recognizes the holiness of his life, not the infallibility of each of his decisions of governance.

The assassination attempt of May 13, 1981, and forgiveness

On May 13, 1981, in Saint Peter's Square, John Paul II was seriously wounded by shots fired by Mehmet Ali Ağca. Rushed into surgery at the Gemelli hospital, he survived. He attributed his survival to the protection of Our Lady of Fatima, whose feast it was: one of the bullets was later set into the crown of the statue at Fatima. In December 1983 he visited his attacker in prison and spoke with him at length.



Tomb of John Paul II in Saint Peter's Basilica. Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz, April 26, 2016. CC BY-SA 4.0. Resized and converted to WebP. Source · License

Illness, death and canonization

Suffering from Parkinson's disease, John Paul II carried on his mission despite growing frailty. His last journey abroad took him to Lourdes in August 2004, as a pilgrim among the sick, in the footsteps of Saint Bernadette. He died at the Vatican on the evening of Saturday, April 2, 2005, the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday. At his funeral on April 8, the crowd held up banners reading "Santo subito" ("A saint now!").

Benedict XVI allowed his cause to open without waiting the usual five years. The healing of a French nun with Parkinson's disease, Sister Marie Simon-Pierre, was accepted for his beatification on May 1, 2011. The healing of a

Costa Rican woman, Floribeth Mora Díaz, opened the way to his canonization by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014, on the same day as John XXIII.

Why is Saint John Paul II the patron saint of families and young people?

He wrote at length on human love, marriage and the family, and he trusted young people, taking them seriously from his years as a student chaplain to the great gatherings of World Youth Day. He reminds us that faith takes nothing away from a person but helps them become fully themselves. He defended the dignity of every human life, workers and oppressed peoples, and during the Jubilee of 2000 he asked forgiveness for the faults of the Church's members. Catholics pray to him for families, young people, the sick and those afraid of the future.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint John Paul II in art

He is usually shown in a white cassock, often holding the papal staff topped by a crucifix, or with the Rosary. His motto *Totus tuus* and the letter M of his coat of arms, for Mary, often appear beside him.

To pray with him, read the prayer to Saint John Paul II, or follow the novena to Saint John Paul II, from October 13 to 21, so that it ends on the eve of his feast.

Where to pray to Saint John Paul II

- **Rome**: his tomb in Saint Peter's Basilica, beneath the altar of the Chapel of Saint Sebastian.
- **Wadowice** (Poland): his birthplace, now a museum, and the basilica where he was baptized.
- **Kraków** (Poland): Wawel Cathedral, where he celebrated his first Mass, and the Saint John Paul II Shrine at Łagiewniki, next to the Divine Mercy

Shrine.

- **Washington, D.C.** (United States): the Saint John Paul II National Shrine.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint John Paul II



This page brings together authentic words of Saint John Paul II, the Our Father, which he prayed every day like all Christians, and an original prayer by Saintspedia asking for his intercession. The original prayer was not written by John Paul II: it draws on his life and teaching.

"Be not afraid!": the call of October 22, 1978

On the day his pontificate was inaugurated, in Saint Peter's Square, the new pope issued a call that would become the thread running through his life. It can be prayed as a meditation:

> *"Be not afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ!"*

Source: John Paul II, homily at the Mass for the inauguration of his pontificate, October 22, 1978. The full text is published on the Holy See's website, vatican.va.

"Totus tuus," his motto

On his coat of arms as bishop and then as pope, Karol Wojtyła had two Latin words inscribed: *Totus tuus*, "Totally yours." He had found them in the *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* by Saint Louis de Montfort, which marked him deeply as a young factory worker during the war. Slowly repeating these two words while entrusting your day to the Virgin Mary is a simple way to pray with him.

The Our Father

The traditional prayer of the Church, from the Gospels of Matthew 6 and Luke 11. It was not written by John Paul II.

> *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

Original prayer to Saint John Paul II

Saint John Paul II, you who met so many peoples and so many young people, pray that we may welcome Christ without fear and respect the dignity of every person.

You who knew grief, war and the labor of factory workers at an early age, stay close to those who suffer, to those who have lost a loved one and to those who struggle to earn their daily bread.

We entrust to you young people looking for their path, families going through hardship and those made fragile by illness or age. May our communities become places of listening, trust and protection.

You who forgave the man who tried to kill you, help us open dialogue where fear keeps us apart. Give us the courage to recognize our mistakes, to ask forgiveness and to work for a peace founded on justice.

I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). With you, I say again to the Virgin Mary: Totus tuus, I am all yours. Saint John Paul II, pray for us. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

Saint John Paul II is honored on October 22. He can also be remembered on April 2, the anniversary of his death, and on Divine Mercy Sunday, which he instituted. Begin with a moment of quiet, read the call "Be not afraid!", pray the Our Father and then the original prayer, and end with a small act within your reach: listening to a young person, checking on someone who is ill, reopening a conversation. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint John Paul II, from October 13 to 21, and read the life of Saint John Paul II.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint John Paul II



This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and teaching of Saint John Paul II. He did not write it, and it is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on October 13; it then ends on October 21, and October 22 becomes a day of thanksgiving. You can also pray it at any time of year, for example in the days before Divine Mercy Sunday.

How to pray this novena

Each day, take a quiet moment and name your intention. Read the meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father and a Hail Mary. The small act suggested for each day helps carry the prayer into daily life. A novena does not promise an automatic result; if you miss a day, simply pick up again. Prayer goes hand in hand with the help, care and advice a situation may need.

Day 1: Be not afraid

On October 22, 1978, the new pope invited the world to "open wide the doors for Christ." Christian courage often begins with a sincere prayer rather than a spectacular success.

Prayer: Lord, you know my fears. Give me the trust to open my life to you, hiding nothing. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Name one specific fear before God and entrust it to him.

Day 2: Walking through grief

By the age of twenty, Karol Wojtyła had lost his mother, his brother and his father. He never stopped praying for them. Grief can remain a wound, but it does not imprison those who entrust it to God.

Prayer: God of life, I entrust to you those I have lost. Comfort those who mourn and keep us in the hope of the resurrection. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Pray by name for someone who has died, or call a person who is grieving.

Day 3: The dignity of work

During the war, the future pope worked in a quarry and in a factory. He kept a deep respect for workers, which he expressed in his 1981 encyclical on human work.

Prayer: Lord, bless the work of our hands. Support those looking for a job and those whose work is hard. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Thank someone whose work serves others without being noticed.

Day 4: Walking with young people

As a young priest, he took students hiking and talked with them about love and faith. As pope, he created World Youth Day. He trusted young people and took them seriously.

Prayer: Lord, walk with young people who are looking for their path. May our presence encourage them without holding them back. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

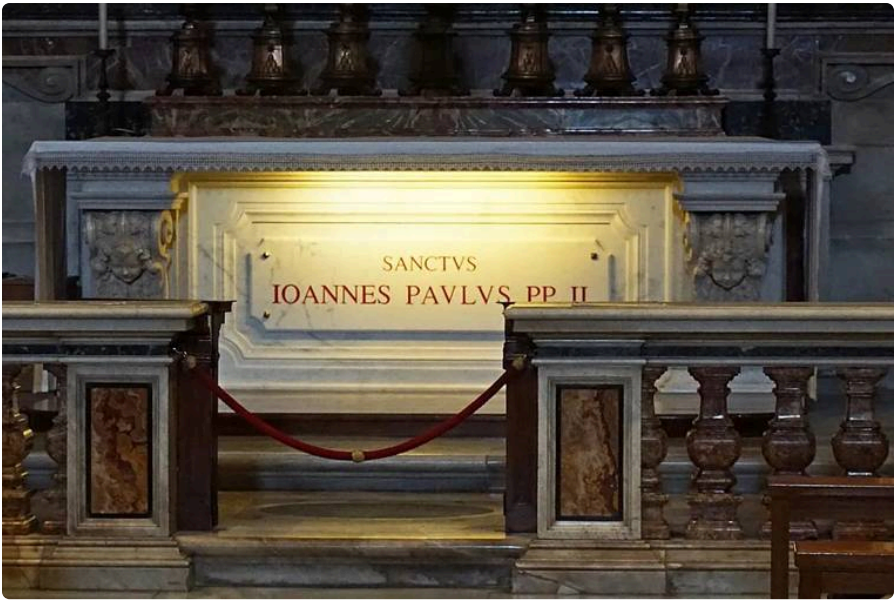
Today: Give a young person your full attention, without rushing.

Day 5: Supporting families

John Paul II wrote a great deal about human love and marriage. Family life calls for patience, responsibility and forgiveness. This care also reaches people who live alone and those who carry difficult relationships.

Prayer: Lord, support our families and all who live with loneliness. Give us patience, tenderness and a sense of responsibility. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Offer practical help to a household or to someone who is isolated.



Tomb of John Paul II in Saint Peter's Basilica. Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz, April 26, 2016. CC BY-SA 4.0. Resized and converted to WebP. Source · License

Day 6: Forgiving

After the attack of May 13, 1981, John Paul II publicly forgave his attacker, then went to see him in prison. Forgiveness does not do away with justice or with necessary protection, but it frees the heart from hatred.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to forgive, even slowly. Unite in me truth, justice and the desire for peace. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Entrust in prayer someone who has hurt you, or take a fitting step toward reconciliation.

Day 7: Totus tuus with Mary

All his life, John Paul II entrusted everything to the Virgin Mary: "Totus tuus," totally yours. He prayed the Rosary every day and added the Luminous Mysteries to it in 2002.

Prayer: Virgin Mary, I entrust myself to you as Saint John Paul II did. Lead me to your Son. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Pray one decade of the Rosary, perhaps a Luminous Mystery.

Day 8: Staying close in suffering

In his last years, the ailing pope did not hide. He showed that a person's worth is not measured by efficiency. Presence honors those who suffer, without pretending to explain their suffering.

Prayer: Lord, look upon those who suffer and those who care for them. Teach us faithful presence and the right kind of help. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

Today: Visit or call someone who is sick or elderly.

Day 9: Jesus, I trust in you

John Paul II died on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday, a feast he had instituted in 2000. He wanted the whole world to hear that God's mercy is greater than our sins.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint John Paul II, help me believe in your mercy. Jesus, I trust in you. Amen.

Today: Go to confession, or spend some time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

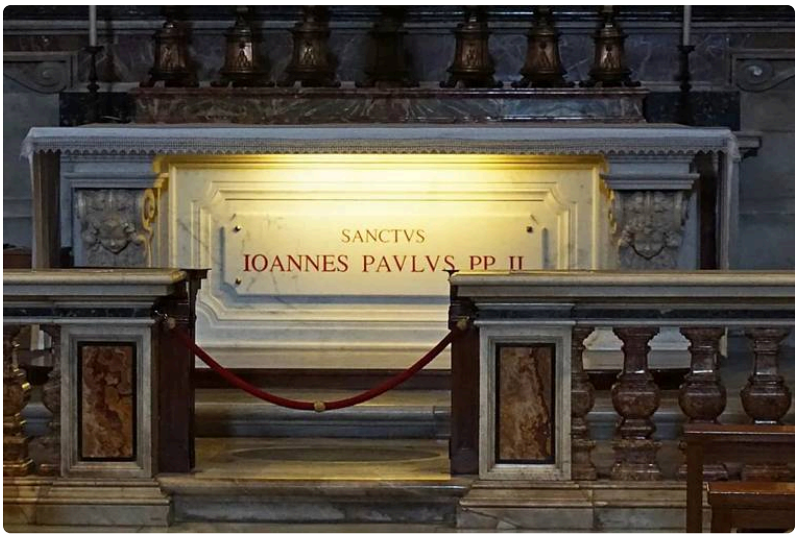
Closing prayer

Saint John Paul II, you who opened your life to Christ without fear, I entrust to you the intention of these nine days. Pray for young people, for families, for the sick and for peace in the world. Obtain for us the grace to live as witnesses of hope, all for Jesus through Mary. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint John Paul II and the prayer to Saint John Paul II.

PILGRIMAGE

Saint Peter's Basilica and John Paul II's Tomb



Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City houses Saint John Paul II's tomb in the Chapel of Saint Sebastian. This place of prayer connects the pope's memory with the wider pilgrimage tradition surrounding the apostles' tombs.

History and connection with the saint

John Paul II, pope from 1978 to 2005, was first buried in the Vatican Grottoes. After his beatification in 2011, his remains were moved to the Chapel of Saint Sebastian inside the basilica. He was canonised in 2014. His tomb lies beneath the chapel's altar and should be distinguished from his original burial place in the grottoes.

A place for prayer

Prayer at the tomb can focus on families, young people, human dignity and peace. A visit cannot encompass an entire pontificate, but it can help us entrust an intention and continue an act of service. The basilica remains an active place of worship: silence and respect for celebrations are part of the visit.

Related reading

- Read the life of Saint John Paul II
- Associated prayer
- Nine-day novena

CREDITS

Credits and sources

Texts: Saintspedia (saintspedia.com). The sources cited in each part are those of the corresponding page of the website. Biographical data partly from Wikidata (CC0). Font: EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License).

Images

- Cover: Chidiu, 1998-10-11. Recadrage / crop Stv26. CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons. WebP. Source
- Karol Wojtyła's birthplace in Wadowice, now a museum.: Image: Pimke, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source · License
- Prayer to Saint John Paul II: Chidiu, 1998-10-11. Recadrage / crop Stv26. CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons. WebP. Source
- Novena to Saint John Paul II: Chidiu, 1998-10-11. Recadrage / crop Stv26. CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons. WebP. Source
- Saint Peter’s Basilica and John Paul II’s Tomb: John Paul II’s tomb in Saint Peter’s Basilica. Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz, 26 April 2016. CC BY-SA 4.0. Resized and converted to WebP. Source · License



More free booklets

Lives of the saints, prayers, novenas and places of pilgrimage: find all the booklets to print at

saintspedia.com