

## Pope John Paul II: A Biography

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Pope Saint John Paul II, born Karol Józef Wojty?a, served as Pope from 1978 to 2005. He is referred to by Catholics as St. John Paul the Great, especially in naming institutions.

He was elected by the second Papal conclave of 1978, which was called after Pope John Paul I, who was elected in August after the death of Pope Paul VI, died after thirty-three days. Cardinal Wojty?a was elected on the third day of the conclave and adopted his predecessor's name in tribute to him. John Paul II is recognised as helping to end Communist rule in his native Poland and eventually all of Europe. John Paul II significantly improved the Catholic Church's relations with Judaism, Islam, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Anglican Communion. He upheld the Church's teachings on such matters as artificial contraception and the ordination of women, but also supported the Church's Second Vatican Council and its reforms.

He was one of the most travelled world leaders in history, visiting 129 countries during his pontificate. As part of his special emphasis on the universal call to holiness, he beatified 1,340 people and canonised 483 saints, more than the combined tally of his predecessors during the preceding five centuries. By the time of his death, he had named most of the College of Cardinals, consecrated or co-consecrated a large number of the world's bishops, and ordained many priests. A key goal of his papacy was to transform and reposition the Catholic Church. His wish was "to place his Church at the heart of a new religious alliance that would bring together Jews, Muslims and Christians in a great religious armada".

He was the second longest-serving pope in modern history after Pope Pius IX, who served for nearly 32 years from 1846 to 1878. Born in Poland, John Paul II was the first non-Italian pope since the Dutch Pope Adrian VI, who served from 1522 to 1523. John Paul II's cause for canonisation commenced in 2005 one month after his death with the traditional five-year waiting period waived. On 19 December 2009, John Paul II was proclaimed Venerable by his successor Pope Benedict XVI and was beatified on 1 May 2011 after the Congregation for the Causes of Saints attributed one miracle to his intercession, the healing of a French nun from Parkinson's disease. A second miracle attributed to John Paul II's intercession was approved on 2 July 2013, and confirmed by Pope Francis two days later . John Paul II was canonised on 27 April 2014, together with Pope John XXIII. On 11 September 2014, Pope Francis added John Paul II's optional memorial feast day to the worldwide General Roman Calendar of saints, in response to worldwide requests. It is traditional to celebrate saints' feast days on the anniversary of their deaths, but that of John Paul II is celebrated on the anniversary of his papal inauguration.

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