



Elevated to the papacy in October 1978, Karol Cardinal Wojtyła took the name John Paul II. He became the first Pope ever from Poland, and **the first non-Italian Pope in over 450 years**. Called the "People's Pope" he was a pastor, mystic, philosopher, theologian, educator, poet, playwright, statesman, and outdoorsman.

Under the guidance of Pope John Paul II, a non-violent revolution in Poland resulted in the peaceful overthrow of Poland's Communist regime by the Solidarity Free Trade movement led by Lech Walesa. Eventually, this led to the total collapse of Soviet-style Communist domination in Europe and Russia.

Pope John Paul II reigned as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and sovereign of Vatican City for almost 27 years. Since his death on April 2, 2005, many thousands of people have supported the cause for his sainthood. Blessed John Paul II's canonization as a Saint of the Church took place on April 27, 2014, together with another great, Pope John XXIII.

*Pope Saint John Paul II  
1920-2005*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- If the trips made by Pope John Paul II are calculated in terms of distance, the figures come to 1,167,295 kilometers (or, 700,380 miles) that is 28 times the Earth's circumference or, 3 times the distance between the Earth and Moon!

- Pope John Paul II was reported to have been fluent in at least 8 languages: Polish, Italian, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin. He could also speak Russian, Ukrainian, Slovak, Tagalog, and Japanese with some degree of facility.

- Building harmonious relations with a groweing number of nations during his papacy was also one of his major accomplishments. In the beginning of his pontificate, the Vatican had diplomatic relations with 85 countries. At present, this figure stands at 174.

- One of the most important accomplishments that he is credited with is his role in bringing an end to Soviet-style communist domination in his home-land, Poland, and eventually the whole of Europe. He was the spiritual inspiration behind the withdrawal of communist forces and peaceful revolution in Poland. Lech Walesa, the founder of 'Solidarity', the 10 million member strong free trade union movement, credited the Pope for giving Poles the courage to rise up and stand for their rights.

- He was also the first Pope to meet a Kremlin leader. In December 1989 he met President Mikhail Gorbachev who expressed his admiration for him. Gorbachev credited the Pope with the collapse of the Iron Wall, and said that it could not have been possible without his involvement. He was also the first Pope to enter a mosque.

- In June 2004, President George W. Bush of the USA awarded the Pope the 'Medal of Freedom', which is the highest civil honor of America. The citation that accompanied the medal read, "This son of Poland, whose principled stand for peace and freedom has inspired millions and helped to topple communism and tyranny".



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