

In the Footsteps of Saint John Paul II

10 days / 8 nights

St. John Paul II was deeply rooted in tradition while seeking ever new ways to proclaim the Gospel. Prepare to journey from the darkest moments of humanity to the great light of social change and cultural conversion. The grace of Divine Mercy will guide our way!

Day 1: Departure from the USA

A pilgrimage is a journey toward holiness (Scott Peck, In Search of Stones).

Our pilgrimage begins as we depart the USA on an international overnight flight to Warsaw, Poland; beverages and meals served aloft.

Day 2: Arrive in Warsaw

Our pilgrimage begins as we depart the USA on an international overnight flight to Warsaw, Poland; beverages and meals served aloft.

Upon arrival we transfer to Czestochowa for dinner and overnight.

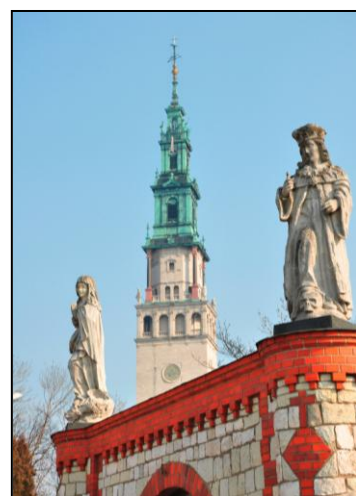
Day 3: Czestochowa

"You need to listen to the pulse of this place to feel how the heart of the nation beats in the heart of Mary" (St. John Paul II, June 4, 1979).

Czestochowa has long been known for the famous Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra and Poland's holiest relic, the Black Madonna painting, a shrine to the Virgin Mary. Every year, millions of pilgrims from all over the world come to Czestochowa to see it. There is great mystery about the history of the miraculous Black Madonna. One legend has it that the presence of the holy painting saved its church from being destroyed in a fire, but not before the flames darkened the flesh tone pigments of the painting. Another legend concerns the two scars on the Black Madonna's right cheek. It is believed that the Hussites stormed the Pauline monastery in 1430, plundering the sanctuary. Among the items stolen was the icon. After putting it in their wagon, the Hussites tried to get away but their horses refused to move. They threw the portrait down to the ground and one of the plunderers drew his sword upon the image and inflicted two deep strikes. When the robber tried to inflict a third strike, he fell to the ground and squirmed in agony until his death. Despite past attempts to repair these scars, there was difficulty in covering up the slashes because the painting was made with tempera infused with diluted wax. Another story states that, as the robber struck the painting twice, the face of the Virgin Mary started to bleed, and in a panic, the scared Hussites retreated and left the painting. Perhaps what's most important is that we recognize the Virgin Mary is shown as the "Hodegetria" ("One Who Shows the Way") as in the painting, the Virgin directs attention away from herself, gesturing with her right hand toward Jesus as the source of salvation. In turn, the child extends his right hand toward the viewer in blessing while holding a book of gospels in his left hand. Here we celebrate Mass after which a local monk will allow us a tour of the monastery and the treasury. In the early afternoon we drive south into Poland's Tatras Mountains. Dinner and overnight tonight will be in Zakopane.

Day 4: Zakopane

The creative fruits of Karol Szymanowski included not only musical works, but poetry and a novel on Greek love entitled Efebos. Writing about his novel, Szymanowski said, "In it I expressed much, perhaps all that I have to say on this matter, which is for me very important and very beautiful."



We celebrate Mass at the Sanctuary of the Holy Virgin of Fatima, which was constructed in 1999 to commemorate St. John Paul II's survival of an assassination attempt. Then we'll need to hang on(!) as we ride up the Gubałówka mountain on a funicular, a continuous steel cable attached to a pair of tram-like carriages set at a steep angle on narrow gauge rails. From the top we are given a commanding view of Zakopane below and the Tatras across the valley. Our next stop is the Villa Atma, a chalet housing the museum of the famous Polish composer, Karol Szymanowski. There will ample time to explore the always buzzing Krupówki, the central mall lined with restaurants, cafes, boutiques, and souvenir shops, and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant in Zakopane.



Day 5: Krakow: Visit of Old Town

Many legends purport to explain the presence of all the pigeons on the Main Square in Krakow. According to one legend, Henry IV Probus, who tried to take over the Senioral Province during the period of regional disintegration of Poland, attempted to go to Rome with financial offerings in order to gain papal approval for his coronation. However, a certain enchantress turned his knights into pigeons. They allegedly pecked out some pebbles from the walls of St. Mary's Church, which then turned into gold. With these riches the prince set off to Vatican, but while on his way he lost everything and never managed to reach his destination. It is said that while he returned to Kraków, none of his knights ever regained a human form.



This morning we take the short drive from Zakopane to Krakow. Krakow, the former capital of Poland, is one of the most historic and beautiful cities in the country. Our afternoon tour of the city (one of the few Polish cities to escape major devastation during World War II) includes a visit to the Wawel Royal Castle where the monarchs took up residence when the city became the capital in 1038. The 14th century Katedra Wawelska, located inside Wawel Castle, is the spiritual center of the Polish state and was the cathedral of Karol Wojtyla until he became Pope. It is also the burial place of Polish kings and national heroes. We'll be enchanted with Krakow's Old Town which attracts visitors from all over the world with its original medieval architecture and grid of streets revolving around the always vibrant Main Market Square, one of the biggest squares in Europe. We'll visit such attractions as the Town Hall Tower, the Sukiennice (also known as the Cloth Hall which still flourishes as a bustling center of commerce), and St. Mary's Basilica, a brick Gothic church re-built in the 14th century and famous for its wooden altarpiece carved by Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz). We can listen to the bugle call or Hejnal Mariacki played each hour from the highest tower of the church. The call dates back to the Middle Ages when it was announcing the opening and the closing of the city gates. The bugler also played it to alarm his fellow citizens whenever he saw a fire or enemy forces. We'll also see the 14th century Gothic Church of St. Stanislaw (Kosciól na Skalce) also known as Church on the Rock which stands on the site where Bishop Stanislaw of Poland was beheaded and dismembered by order of the King in 1079. This violent story is remarkably similar to that of King Henry II and Bishop Thomas Becket in Canterbury England. Legend has it that the saint's body was miraculously reassembled, which made an apt symbol of the restoration of Poland's unity after its years of fragmentation. It is now a Paulite church & monastery and the place where we will celebrate Mass. We'll also walk down Kanonicza Street, home to many historic buildings including building 21, "Deanery" where St. John Paul II resided while in Krakow. Dinner and overnight will be in Krakow tonight.



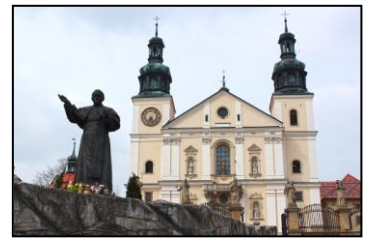
Day 6: Sr. Faustina, John Paul II Center & Nowa Huta

Faustina predicted that her message of Divine Mercy would be suppressed for some time, and appear to be "utterly undone" but that it would be accepted again. On February 8, 1935, she wrote in her diary (Notebook I, item 378): "There will come a time when this work, which God is demanding so very much, will be as though utterly undone. And then



God will act with great power, which will give evidence of its authenticity. It will be a new splendor for the Church, although it has been dormant in it from long ago.” On September 13, 1935, Faustina wrote of a vision about the Chaplet of Divine Mercy in her diary (Notebook I item 476). that the purpose for chaplet's prayers for mercy are threefold: to obtain mercy, to trust in Christ's mercy, and to show mercy to others

Maria Faustina Kowalska, commonly known as Saint Faustina (born Helenka Kowalska August 25, 1905, near Lodz, Poland, then in the Russian Empire, and died October 5, 1938, in Kraków) was a Polish nun, mystic and visionary who is venerated in the Roman Catholic Church as a saint. Throughout her life, she reported a number of visions of and conversations with Jesus which she wrote about in her diary, later published as the book *Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul*. This morning we visit the Convent of Sisters of Mercy in Lagiewniki, where Saint Faustina, the Apostle of Divine Mercy, lived and died. Here we'll enjoy a tour of the Convent and celebrate Mass. Afterwards will visit the new John Paul II Center to venerate a relic (a small vial of blood) of St. John Paul II. The center also contains many personal items that St. John Paul II carried during his life. This afternoon we drive to Nowa Huta located just a few miles east of Krakow. Nowa Huta was started in 1949 as a separate town near Krakow on terrain taken by the Communist government from former villages of Mogiła, Pleszów and Krzesławice. It was planned as a huge centre of heavy industry. The town was to become an ideal town for the Communist propaganda and populated mostly by industrial workers. On July 22, 1954, the Vladimir Lenin Steelworks was opened and in less than 20 years the factory became the biggest steel mill in Poland. In the 1960s the city grew rapidly. The monumental architecture of the Central Square was surrounded by huge apartment blocks. In the 1970s the steel production reached 7 millions tons per yearly. At the same time the biggest tobacco factory in Poland was opened there and a huge cement factory. One type of building lacking from the original urban design of Nowa Huta was a Roman Catholic church. The public campaign to construct it lasted several years. As early as 1960, inhabitants of Nowa Huta began applying for a permit to build a church. In that year, violent street fights with riot-police erupted over a wooden cross, erected without a permit. The locals were supported by Bishop Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, and eventually, a church called the Lord's Arc was built. The complex was consecrated by Archbishop Wojtyła in 1977. After being elected Pope in 1978, St. John Paul II wanted to visit Nowa Huta during his first papal pilgrimage in 1979, but was not permitted to do so. In the 1980s Nowa Huta became a place of many demonstrations and violent street protests of the Solidarity movement, fought by the police. At that time, almost 29,000 of the 38,000 workers of the then Lenin's Steelworks belonged to the Trade Union "Solidarity". Our visit today reminds us that Poland not only suffered unimaginable horrors during WW II but continued to suffer under a different occupation for another 45 years. Dinner and overnight in Krakow.



Day 7: Kalwaria Zebrzydowska & Wadowice

St. John Paul II was one of the most-travelled world leaders in history, visiting 129 countries during his pontificate. He spoke Italian, French, German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Russian, Croatian, Esperanto, Ancient Greek and Latin as well as his native Polish. 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 last five centuries. On December 19, 2009, St. John Paul II was proclaimed venerable by his successor Pope Benedict XVI, was beatified on May 1, 2011 and was canonized on May 27th, 2014.

We start the day with a scenic drive to the city of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, established in 1617 in order to house the growing number of visiting pilgrims. This is also a place where young Karol Wojtyła came to pray and reflect upon his life and service to God. In the lush, green hills of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, we find the famous Calvary paths (an intertwining mesh of churches, chapels and wayside shrines originally built to replicate

the city of Jerusalem). Here we celebrate Mass. Only a short distance from this mystical place we find ourselves in Wadowice, St. John Paul II's birthplace. We will explore the museum in the family home of St. John Paul II, including seeing a collection of objects that belonged to Karol Wojtyła and his family. These objects remind us of the humble life of one of the most influential leaders of the 20th century. We'll also see Virgin Mary's Offertory, a Parochial church and minor basilica from the 15th century (rebuilt in 18th century) which is the parish church attended by young Karol Wojtyła and his family. We return to Krakow in the afternoon for time at leisure. Dinner & overnight in Krakow.

Day 8: Wieliczka Salt Mine

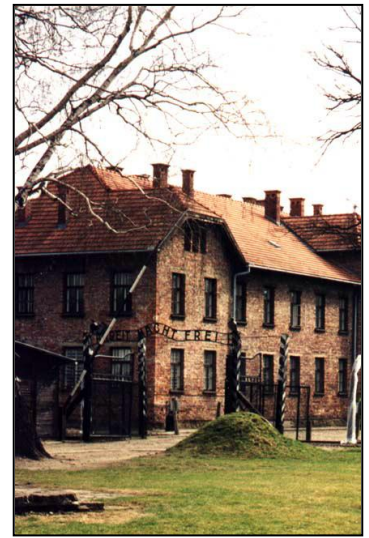
Saint Kinga of Poland was the daughter of King Béla IV of Hungary and Maria Laskarina; she is also a saint in the Catholic Church and patroness of Poland and Lithuania. Kinga became princess when her husband ascended the throne as Prince of Cracov. Despite the marriage, the devout couple took up a vow of chastity. During her reign Kinga got involved in charitable works such as visiting the poor and helping the lepers. When her husband died in 1279, she sold all her material possessions and gave the money to the poor. She no longer wanted any part in governing the kingdom and decided to join the Poor Clares monastery at Sandeck. Before passing away in 1292, she would spend the rest of her life in contemplative prayer and did not allow anyone to refer to her past role as Grand Duchess of Poland.

This morning we tour the Wieliczka Salt Mine, located in the town of Wieliczka. The mine is one of the world's oldest operating salt mines and believed to be the world's 14th oldest company still in operation. Every year about 1.2 million people visit the Wieliczka Salt Mine, which features a 3.5-km touring route (less than one percent of the length of the mine's passages) that includes historic statues and mythical figures. The oldest sculptures were carved out of rock salt by miners, while more recent figures have been fashioned by contemporary artists. Even the crystals of the chandeliers are made from rock salt that has been dissolved and reconstituted to achieve a clear, glass-like appearance. At the end of the tour, there is a large cathedral (the Church of St. Kinga) and reception room that can be reserved for private functions, such as weddings or private parties. The Wieliczka mine is often referred to as "the Underground Salt Cathedral of Poland." We will celebrate Mass in the chapel of the Wieliczka mine. Another sumptuous dinner awaits us in Krakow tonight.

Day 9: Auschwitz

Since the concentration camps were designed to degrade prisoners beneath human dignity, maintaining the will to survive was seen in itself as an act of rebellion. Primo Levi was taught this lesson by his fellow prisoner and friend Steinlauf who said that "... precisely because the camp was a great machine to reduce us to beasts, we must not become beasts; that even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness; and that, if we want to survive, then it's important that we strive to preserve at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the external shape of civilization."

Today we visit Auschwitz, a network of Nazi German concentration and extermination camps built and operated by the Third Reich in Polish areas annexed by Nazi Germany during World War II. This was the largest of the German concentration camps, consisting of Auschwitz I (the Stammlager or base camp), Auschwitz II-Birkenau (the Vernichtungslager or extermination camp), Auschwitz III-Monowitz, also known as Buna-Monowitz (a labor camp), and several satellite camps. Although the camp's first commandant, Rudolf Höss, testified after the war at the Nuremberg Trials, that up to three million people had died there (2.5 million gassed, and 500,000 from disease and starvation), that figure has since been revised to about 1.1 million, around 90 percent of them Jews. This marks one of the darkest seasons of the earth's human existence. On



January 27, 1945, Auschwitz was liberated by Soviet troops, a day commemorated around the world as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In 1947, Poland founded a museum on the site of Auschwitz I and II, which by 1994 had seen 22 million visitors—700,000 annually—pass through the iron gates crowned with the infamous motto, Arbeit macht frei ("work makes you free"). The museum has allowed scenes for three movies to be filmed on the site: Pasazerka (1963) by Polish director Andrzej Munk, Landscape After the Battle, (1970) by Polish director Andrzej Wajda, and a television miniseries War and Remembrance (1978). Permission was denied to Steven Spielberg to film scenes for Schindler's List (1993) but a "mirror" camp was constructed outside the infamous archway for the scene where the train arrives carrying the women who were saved by Oskar Schindler. Our tour will include seeing the cell of St. Maximilian Kolbe, O.F.M. Conv., who gave his life in substitution for a prisoner who was to be executed. We celebrate Mass this afternoon in a nearby church named for this saint, and later return to Krakow. This evening, we enjoy a memorable farewell dinner to contemplate and share all that we have felt on our pilgrimage of faith: from the darkest moments of humanity to the great light of social change and conversion.



Day 10: Depart for Home

We will let the power of these holy places and priceless experiences settle over us, then like other pilgrims of other times, go back to our lives with renewed faith.

This morning we transfer to Krakow airport for our return flight back home.

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