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SPECIAL REPORT: THE 25 YEARS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

PONTIFICATE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II: AN OVERVIEW

VATICAN CITY, OCT 6, 2003 (VIS) - John Paul II was elected Pope on October 16, 1978, and his pontificate was solemnly inaugurated on October 22. What follows is a year-by-year overview of his papacy, listing its major events.

Annual Messages (Lent, to Youth, for World Mission Day, etc.) and events, such as the Holy Father's January address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See and his Christmas and Easter liturgical celebrations, are not listed.

Today we present the years 1978 through 1983. The overviews will appear in coming days as follows: October 7 (1984-1988); October 8 (1989-1993); October 9 (1994-1998) and October 10 (1999 through October 15, 2003).

1978

Oct. 16: Cardinal Karol Wojtyla is elected successor to Pope John Paul I, becoming the 264th Pope of the Catholic Church. He is the first non-Italian Pope since Adrian VI (1522-23), the first Polish Pope, and the youngest Pope since Pius IX (1846-78). He takes the name John Paul II.

Oct. 17: First "Urbi et Orbi" radio message of John Paul II.

Oct. 22: Solemn inauguration of his ministry as Universal Pastor of the Church.

Oct. 23: John Paul II's historic embrace of Cardinal Wyszynski.

Oct. 25: First trip by new pontiff to Castelgandolfo: visit to the parish church and papal villa.

Oct. 29: First pilgrimage outside Rome to the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Mentorella.

Nov. 5: Visit of John Paul II to Assisi to venerate the tomb of St. Francis, patron of Italy, and to the basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva to venerate the tomb of St. Catherine, patroness of Italy.

Nov. 12: As bishop of Rome, John Paul II takes possession of St. John Lateran Basilica.

Dec. 5: John Paul II begins his pastoral visits to the parishes in the diocese of Rome: St. Francis Xavier at Garbatella.

1979

Jan. 24: John Paul II accepts the request for mediation in the border conflict between Argentina and Chile.

Jan. 24: Audience granted to the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

Jan. 25: First pastoral visit of John Paul II outside Italy: the Dominican Republic, Mexico (for the Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, Puebla) and the Bahamas.

Mar. 4: First papal Encyclical "Redemptor Hominis" (On the redemption and dignity of the human race), published March 15.

Mar. 13: John Paul II presides over funeral of Secretary of State Cardinal Jean Villot, who died on March 9.

Apr. 30: Archbishop Agostino Casaroli is appointed pro-secretary of state and pro-prefect of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church.

June 2: Second pastoral visit of John Paul II outside Italy: Poland (June 2-10).

June 2: Historic homily of John Paul II at Victory Square in Warsaw: "It is not possible to understand the history of the Polish nation without Christ."

June 30: Celebration of the first consistory in his pontificate for the creation of 14 cardinals, among whom were Agostino Casaroli, secretary of state. (One additional Cardinal was reserved "in pectore," Chinese Ignatius Gong Pin-mei, whose appointment was published only in the consistory of June 28, 1991).

Sep. 29: Third pastoral visit of John Paul II outside Italy: Ireland, the United Nations and the United States of America (September 29-October 8).

Oct. 2: John Paul II addresses the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Oct. 16: Post-Synodal Pastoral Exhortation "Catechesi Tradendae," published October 25.

Nov. 5: First Plenary Assembly of the College of Cardinals on the themes: the structure of the Roman Curia; the Church and culture; the financial situation of the Holy See (November 5-9).

Nov. 28: Fourth pastoral visit of John Paul II outside Italy: Turkey (November 28-30).

1980

Jan. 14: Opening of the Special Assembly for the Netherlands of the Synod of the Bishops on: "The pastoral action of the Church in Holland in the present situation" (January 14-31).

Apr. 4: Good Friday: John Paul II hears confessions of the faithful for the first time in St. Peter's Basilica.

May 2: Fifth pastoral visit of John Paul II outside Italy: Za ire, Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ghana, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast (May 2-12).

May 30: Sixth pastoral visit of John Paul II outside Italy: France (May 30-June 2).

June 2: John Paul II's address to UNESCO in Paris.

June 21: Visit of President Jimmy Carter of the United States.

June 30: Seventh foreign pastoral visit: Brazil (June 30-July 12).

Aug. 8: For the first time John Paul II alludes to the events happening in Poland regarding Solidarnosc.

Sep. 26: Fifth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: "The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World."

Sep. 28: Pastoral visit to Subiaco and meeting with the European bishops.

Oct. 17: Official visit of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and of H.R.H. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Nov. 15: Eighth pastoral visit outside Italy: West Germany (November 15-19).

Nov. 25: Pastoral visit to Capodichino (Naples), Potenza, Balvano, Avellino, after the earthquake.

Nov. 30: Second papal Encyclical "Dives in misericordia" (On the mercy of God), published December 2.

Dec. 19: Official visit of President Cvijetin Mijatovic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Dec. 30: Apostolic Letter proclaiming Sts. Cyril and Methodius, together with St. Benedict, co-patrons of Europe.

1981

Feb. 2: John Paul II meets with Rome's Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff, during his pastoral visit to the parish of Sts. Carlo and Biagio in Catinari.

Feb. 16: Ninth foreign pastoral visit: Pakistan, the Philippines, Guam (U.S.A.), Japan, and Anchorage (U.S.A.) (February 16-27).

May 13: At 5:19 p.m. Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca makes an attempt on the Pope's life while he was circling St. Peter's Square in a jeep before his Wednesday general audience. The Pope is brought to Gemelli Hospital where he undergoes a six-hour operation.

May 17: The Holy Father recites the angelus at Gemelli hospital: "Pray for the brother who shot me, whom I have sincerely forgiven."

May 31: John Paul II creates the Council of Cardinals for the Study of Organizational and Economic Problems of the Holy See, following a meeting of the Sacred College, November 5-9, 1980.

June 3: The Pope returns to the Vatican after 22 days of recovery at Gemelli Hospital.

June 20: John Paul II is newly hospitalized for a cytomegalovirus infection. On August 5 he undergoes a second operation; leaves hospital definitively on August 14, returns to the Vatican, then goes to Castelgandolfo on August 16. Spends a total of 78 days in the hospital between May 13 and August 14.

July 13: First meeting of the Council of Cardinals for the Study of Organizational and Economic Problems of the Holy See.

Sep. 14: Third papal Encyclical "Laborem exercens" (On human work).

Nov. 13: In an address to the 21st conference of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization John Paul II urges the elimination of "absolute poverty, ... a condition in which life is so limited ... as to be beneath any rational definition of human decency."

Nov. 22: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Familiaris Consortio" (On the Family), published on December 15.

Nov. 25: Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger appointed prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Dec. 12: John Paul II sends delegates from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences to the presidents of the U.S.A., USSR, Great Britain, France, and to the United Nations, to explain their document on the eventual consequences of the use of nuclear arms in Europe and the world.

Dec. 13: John Paul II requests prayers for the Polish nation, calling the situation a state of emergency.

1982

Jan. 6: Apostolic Letter "Caritatis Christi," for the Church in China.

Feb. 12: 10th foreign pastoral visit: Nigeria, Benin, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea (February 12-19).

Mar. 21: Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for the Church in China.

Apr. 1: John Paul II receives credentials of the first British ambassador to the Vatican since the reign of Henry VIII.

May 12: 11th pastoral visit outside Italy: Portugal, one year after the assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square (May 12-15).

May 22: Mass in St. Peter's Basilica for justice and peace, and for peace between Argentina and Great Britain (over the Falkland Islands/Malvinas).

May 28: 12th pastoral visit outside Italy: Great Britain (May 28-June 2).

May 29: Joint statement of John Paul II and the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, at the end of the ecumenical celebration in the Anglican Canterbury Cathedral. New Catholic-Anglican theological commission is announced.

June 7: John Paul II meets U.S. President Ronald Reagan for the first time; they pledge to work for world peace and justice.

June 10: 13th pastoral visit outside Italy: Argentina, in relation to the war between Argentina and Great Britain (June 10-13).

June 15: 14th pastoral visit outside Italy: one-day trip to Geneva, Switzerland. John Paul II addresses the 68th session of the International Labor Conference.

Aug. 2: The Holy See announces diplomatic relations with Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Aug. 29: 15th pastoral visit outside Italy, and 28th within Italy: one-day trip to the Republic of San Marino and to Rimini, Italy.

Sep. 15: Private meeting with Yasser Arafat on the prospects for peace in the Middle East. Renewed appeal for peace in Lebanon, after the murder of president-elect Bechir Gemayel.

Oct. 10: Canonization of Fr. Maximilian Kolbe. Present at the canonization ceremony is Mr. Franciszek Gajownizek, the man for whom Fr. Maximilian offered his life in the concentration camp at Auschwitz.

Oct. 19: Meeting with Italian President Sandro Pertini, at Castelporziano.

Oct. 28: Official visit of President Karl Carstens of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Oct. 31: 16th pastoral visit outside Italy: Spain, for the closure of the 4th Centenary of the death of St. Teresa of Avila (October 31-November 9).

Nov. 9: Message to the peoples of Europe from the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Nov. 23: Second plenary session of the College of Cardinals: principle topic is the reform of the Roman Curia (November 23-26).

Nov. 26: John Paul II announces the Holy Year of Redemption: from Lent 1983 to Easter 1984.

1983

Jan. 6: Papal Bull "Aperite Portas Redemptori," announcing the Jubilee for the 1950th anniversary of the Redemption.

Jan. 25: John Paul II's Pastoral Constitution "Sacrae Disciplinae Leges," for the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law.

Jan. 25: Promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law by John Paul II.

Feb. 2: Second consistory of John Paul II for the creation of 18 cardinals.

Mar. 2: 17th pastoral visit outside Italy: Lisbon, Portugal, and Central America - Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize and Haiti (March 2-10).

Mar. 24: John Paul II accepts credentials of the ambassador from Sweden, re-establishing diplomatic relations after 456 years.

Mar. 25: Opening of the Holy Year of the Redemption (March 25, 1983-April 22, 1984).

Mar. 25: The Shroud of Turin is bequeathed to the Pope by the deposed King Umberto of Savoy, whose family owned it since the Middle Ages.

June 16: 18th pastoral visit outside Italy: Poland (June 16-23).

Aug. 14: 19th pastoral visit outside Italy: Lourdes, France (August 14-15).

Sep. 10: 20th foreign pastoral visit: Austria (September 10-13).

Sep. 29: Sixth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on: "Penance and Reconciliation in the Mission of the Church" (September 29-October 29). At the final session Pope discloses his message to the heads of government of the U.S.A. and USSR calling for negotiations aimed at ending the arms race.

Oct. 16: Act of entrustment and consecration of the world to Our Lady of Fatima by John Paul II, together with the cardinals and bishops participating in the Synod of Bishops.

Nov. 5: Letter for the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther.

Nov. 24: Publication of the "Charter of the Rights of the Family."

Dec. 11: First papal visit to a Lutheran congregation, participating in a prayer service at the evangelical Lutheran Church of Rome.

Dec. 27: Visit to Rebibbia prison and meeting with Ali Agca, the Turk who made an attempt on his life on May 13, 1981.

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