

BRINGING THE CARMELITE SAINTS ALIVE

THIRTEEN EDITION

“ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY EDITION”



IN THIS MONTH OF APRIL, WE WILL BE HIGHLIGHTING POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II WHO ENTERED INTO ETERNAL LIFE (HEAVEN) ON APRIL 2, 2005, THE EVE OF DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY – 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



“DO NOT BE AFRAID! OPEN WIDE THE DOORS FOR CHRIST!”

As we look upon the life of Pope St. John Paul II, Karol Wojtyła, “Lolek” who they used to call him, which means “Chuck” we travel back to his birth, his family and his roots. Karol Wojtyła, the Pope’s father was born on August 18, 1879, and was a non-commissioned officer in the 56th Infantry Regiment of the Austro-Hungarian army. His mother Emilia was born on March 26, 1884, and completed eight grades at a school run by the Sisters of Mercy. Karol and Emilia were married in 1904 and moved to Wadowice. The focal point of Wadowice was St. Mary’s Church (more formally, the Church of the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary). The baptistery chapel, in which thousands of children were christened over the centuries, displayed a copy of Poland’s greatest national icon, the “Black Madonna”, which tradition held to have been painted by St. Luke on a table belonging to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph.

Just outside the town, with easy walking distance, was a Carmelite monastery, home to one of the Church’s most rigorous religious orders. Its most notable friar had been Rafal Kalinowski. Condemned to death but ultimately dispatched to eight years of Siberian exile for his role in the 1863 Polish Uprising against the czarist empire. Rafal entered the Discalced Carmelites at age forty after the period of self-imposed exile in Paris, and died in the “monastery on the hill” as the people of Wadowice called it, in 1907. He would be canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1991. About six miles farther along the road toward Krakow was one of the great pilgrimage sites in Poland, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, which would play a large role in Karol’s spiritual life as long as he lived in Poland.

Karol and Emilia’s first son was “Edmund” who was called “Mundek” was born on August 27, 1906. He was awarded the degree “doctor of medical science”. Emilia gave birth to a daughter some years later after Edmund. She died in infancy and there are no records of her birth, baptism or death. She was presumably baptized privately at home, perhaps by her parents as the Church permits in emergencies.

On May 18, 1920, the couple’s third child and second son was born “Lolek”, as friends and family would call him was baptized by a military chaplain, Father Franciszek Zak, at St. Mary’s Church on June 20, 1920 and formally given the names Karol Josef which were reminiscent of the Habsburg monarchy his father had served. Emilia would walk with Lolek and tell her neighbors, “You’ll see, My Lolek will be a great man someday,” Talk about prophetic words!

On April 13, 1929, while Karol was completing the third grade, his mother, who had often been ill, died of kidney failure and congenital heart disease. Emilia was forty-five years old when she died, and Karol was one month short of nine years old. Karol had many mentors in his youth and adolescence. The most influential of them was his father. His father universally referred to in Wadowice as “the captain”. He taught “Lolek” German at home and Polish literature, Polish history, which he illustrated with readings of poets like Cyprian Norwid. Karol also remembers his father as a “Man of constant prayer”. At night, as in the early morning, young Karol would find his father on his knees silently praying. Father and son read the Bible together and prayed the rosary regularly.

Captain Karol Wojtyła, a religious educator, by example taught his son that the Church is more than a visible institution. The “Mystery of the Church”. Its “invisible dimension” is larger than the structure and organization of the Church,” which are at the service of the mystery. By the testimony of the son, it was his father’s way of life that first planted in the future Pope the idea that the life of faith has first to do with interior conversion.

Pope St. John Paul II has also written of how impressed he has been since his youth, by Jesus to His disciples, “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

This admonition against fear presumed that there might be things of which the disciples might be afraid: there would be persecutions, there would be hardened hearts. "He did not prepare them for easy success," John Paul once wrote. But here, he suggests, is the heart of the Gospel: The Gospel is not a promise of easy success. It does not promise a comfortable life to anyone. It makes demands and, at the same time, it is a great promise, the promise of eternal life for man, who is subject to the law of death, and the promise of victory through faith for man, who is subject to many trials and setbacks. Demand and promise: Cross before Crown – given John Paul's testimony that this spirituality of redemption suffering has been the heart of the Gospel for him since he was a youngster, one can see here another imprint of the teaching and example of the most influential religious educator of his early years; his father, the man who first took him on pilgrimage to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, the year after his mother died.

In his late elementary and early high school years, Karol also drew close to his brother. Edmund took his younger brother to soccer games, sometimes seating him on his shoulder so that he could see better. Karol, for his part visited the hospital that Edmund worked at and put on one-man shows for Edmund's patients. This blossoming friendship between brothers was not to last though, for on December 5, 1932, Dr. Edmund Wojtyla died, a few days after contracting scarlet fever from one of his patients. He was just twenty-six years old. Karol was struck even harder by his brother's wholly unexpected death than by the death of his mother. The inscription on Edmund's tombstone in Krakow describes him as "a victim of his profession, sacrificing his young life in the service of humanity." For Karol, then twelve years old, it was a lesson in God's will, to which he attributed his brother's self-sacrifice when neighbors sought to console him.

September 1, 1939 World War II begins as Germany invades Poland

World War II which Poles sometimes describe as the war they lost twice, was an unmitigated disaster for Poland. Six million of its citizens, out of a prewar population of 35 million, were killed in combat or murdered, a mortality rate of eighteen percent. The nation was physically decimated. Poland became the site of the greatest slaughters of the Holocaust. And at the end, another totalitarian power sized control of Poland's political future. The experience of the war was decisive in forming the man who became Pope John Paul II. The war horrors and an unexpected encounter during the Occupation with a lay mystic, Jan Tyranowski begin to shape Karol's distinctively Carmelite spirituality, which focused on the cross as the center of the Christian life, and indeed the center of human history. It was during the Occupation, and in part because of the Occupation, that his vocational discernment began to bend inexorably toward the priesthood.

There is so much more to our dear Pope Saint John Paul II and this is just a small little piece of his early years of his life to form him into the man that he would become. The Greatest Evangelist since St. Paul. In the future I will be following up with talks about his life.

OUR CARMELITE MISSION

MAY WE EMBRACE MARY'S PURITY OF HEART (PURITAS CORDIAS), HELPING US TO PONDER THE LAW OF THE LORD DAY AND NIGHT HELPING US TO BE CONTEMPLATIVES AND TEACHING US TO LISTEN. WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHER AND LEADER, ST. ELIJAH WITH HIS FLAMING ZEAL AND COURAGE. "HIS PROPHET SPIRIT IN COMBATING THE EVILS OF HIS DAY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CARMELITE LIFE."

MAY OUR LADY'S MANTLE WRAP YOU ALL WITH HER PRECIOUS LOVE.

ALL THROUGH THE IMMACULATE & SORROWFUL HEART & TEARS OF MARY IN UNION WITH THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, YOUR SISTER IN CARMEL,

LINDA



“THE EUCHARIST IS THE SECRET OF MY DAY. IT GIVES STRENGTH AND MEANING TO ALL MY ACTIVITIES OF SERVICE TO THE CHURCH AND TO THE WHOLE WORLD...LET JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT SPEAK TO YOUR HEARTS. IT IS HE WHO IS THE TRUE ANSWER OF LIFE THAT YOU SEEK. HE STAYS HERE WITH US; HE IS GOD WITH US. SEEK HIM WITHOUT TIRING, WELCOME HIM WITHOUT RESERVE, LOVE HIM WITHOUT INTERRUPTION: TODAY, TOMORROW, FOREVER.”

FOR POPE JOHN PAUL II, THE KEY TO REKINDLING EUCHARISTIC LOVE IS TO LOOK TO MARY, WHO WAS THE FIRST “TABERNACLE” IN HISTORY. IN HIS ENCYCLICAL ON THE EUCHARIST, HE EXPLAINED, “AND IS NOT THE ENRaptured GAZE OF MARY AS SHE CONTEMPLATED THE FACE OF THE NEWBORN CHRIST AND CRADLED HIM IN HER ARMS THAT UNPARALLELED MODEL OF LOVE WHICH SHOULD INSPIRE US EVERY TIME WE RECEIVE THE EUCHARIST IN COMMUNION.”

