

# Warsaw to Krakow: A Pilgrimage of Faith and Social Transformation

11 days / 9 nights

Saint 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 Warsaw

*Warsaw is known as the "Phoenix City" because it has literally risen from the ashes of World War II. Eighty percent of its buildings were destroyed but through hard work and perseverance, the Varsovians, as natives are called, have rebuilt it.*

We'll transfer to our hotel for dinner and an overnight stay upon arrival in Warsaw.

## Day 3: Warsaw City Tour

*Folk etymology attributes Warsaw's name to a fisherman, Wars, and his wife Sawa. According to legend, Sawa was a mermaid living in the Vistula River who Wars fell in love with. The mermaid is Warsaw's symbol and can be found on statues throughout the city and on the city's coat of arms. In 1653, the poet Zygmunt Laukowski asked an interesting question: Warsaw of strong walls; why was the emblem Mermaid with sharp sword, given you by the kings?*

We'll begin our tour of Warsaw, an inspiring city admired for the way it managed the transition from years of "urban misery" into the era of "urban renaissance," with a visit to the church of St. Stanislaw Kostka where Blessed Father Jerzy Popieluszko (associated with the Solidarity Union that opposed the Communist regime in Poland) worked and is buried. He was murdered on October 19, 1984, and was subsequently recognized as a martyr by the Church, and was beatified on June 6, 2010. Here we'll celebrate the first Mass of our pilgrimage. Here too, we'll no doubt consider, with added insight and appreciation Polish native, Karol Wojtyla, who would become St. John Paul II. As our tour continues, we'll notice that Warsaw, one of Europe's tallest cities, is a mixture of modern and contemporary architecture, and its buildings reflect nearly every European architectural style and historical period, from gothic to renaissance to baroque to neoclassical. We'll see the Royal Castle located in Castle Square at the entrance to Old Town. The Castle, with a long and dramatic history, served as the seat of the kings of Poland. We'll visit St. John's Cathedral before walking through the Old Town Market Place (*Rynek Starego Miasta*), the center and oldest part of Warsaw which was restored to its prewar appearance after World War II and which will charm us with all its shops, restaurants, and galleries. After lunch, we'll take in the New Town Market beginning with the late-Gothic Warsaw Barbican (a semicircular fortified outpost and one of few remaining relics of the complex network of historic fortifications that once encircled the city) and the birthplace of Madam Curie (Curie was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, and is the only woman to win in two fields, and the only person to win in multiple sciences). At Krasinski Square, we will stop by the Monument of Warsaw's Uprising then drive to see the Ghetto Memorial where we'll enjoy panoramic views of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and Warsaw's Grand Opera and National Theatre House (the theatre was inaugurated on February 24, 1833, with a production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*).

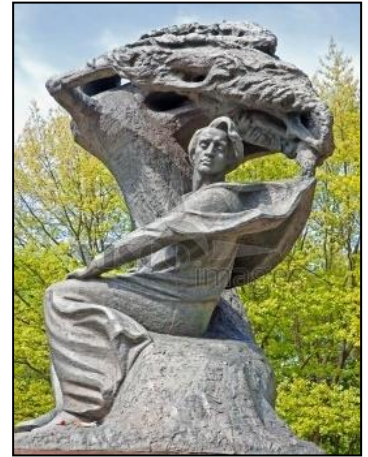


And we can't leave Warsaw without paying homage to its famous composer, Frederic Chopin. In 1882 at the Church of the Holy Cross, one of the most notable Baroque churches in Poland's capital, an urn containing the heart of Frederic Chopin was immured in a pillar. We'll also make a stop at the Royal Lazienki Park to see the Monument of Frederick Chopin which was designed in 1907 to mark the centenary of Chopin's birth in 1910; however it's unveiling was delayed by controversy about the design so the statue wasn't cast and erected until 1926. During World War II, the statue was destroyed by the occupying soldiers and according to local legend, the next day a handwritten sign was found at the site which read: "I don't know who destroyed me, but I know why: so that I won't play the funeral march for your leader." After a full day, we'll enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.



**Day 4: Warsaw, Niepokalanow, & Czestochowa**

*Niepokalanów (City of the Immaculate Mother of God) was once the largest monastery in the world, housing as many as 760. During the Second World War, the monastery provided shelter to approximately 3,000 Polish and Jewish refugees from western Poland. Because media evangelisation was forbidden, the friars in Niepokalanów tried to keep up common prayers, help the prisoners and refugees, and secretly taught religious courses.*



We begin the day by visiting one of the most important places of pilgrimage in Poland, the village of Niepokalanow, home to the Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a Conventual Franciscan Friary founded by St. Maximilian Kolbe. Here we celebrate Mass and learn about the history of Christianity in Poland. Czestochowa is our next stop, long 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 origination and 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 painted 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. The local monks will allow us a private tour of the monastery and the treasury. Tonight enjoy a sumptuous dinner and an overnight stay at our local hotel.



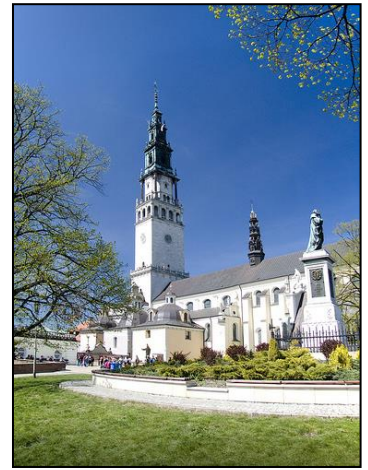
**Day 5: Czestochowa, Wadowice, & Zakopane**

*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 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014.*





Before leaving for Wadowice, the birthplace of St. John Paul II, we celebrate Mass at the Chapel of the Black Madonna. When we arrive in Wadowice, situated in the eastern part of Silesian Plateau, 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. This afternoon, we'll thrill at Zakopane, informally known as "the winter capital of Poland" at the foot of the magnificent Tatra Mountains. Zakopane, a tourist mecca for all seasons, has both hiking trails and ski slopes as well as quaint shops, stores and restaurants that keep patrons warm with fireplaces and that serve delicious traditional Polish food. After a day of spectacular scenery and holy places of pilgrimage, we'll enjoy dinner together then proceed to our hotel for an overnight stay.



### **Day 6: Zakopane: Visit of the Area**

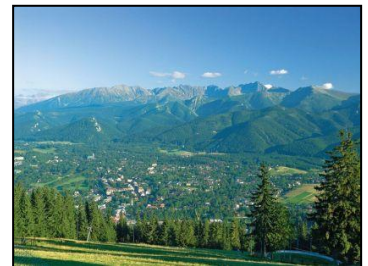
*The creative fruits of Karol Szymanowski included not only musical works, but poetry and a novel on Greek love entitled Efebos. Writing about his novel, Szymanowski said, "In it I expressed much, perhaps all that I have to say on this matter, which is for me very important and very beautiful."*

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. We also tour the Wladyslaw Hasior Art Gallery, displaying amazing assemblages by this avant-garde artist and one of the leading Polish contemporary sculptors connected with the Podhale region. The gallery is being continuously developed and altered, with a very unique installation of exhibits and a magical space imbued with music, light, and huge mirrors. Toward the end of another full and wonderful day, we 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 7: Zakopane, Kalwaria, Zebrzydowska, Wieliczka, & Krakow**

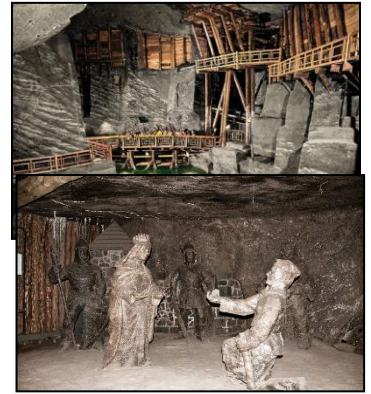
*Saint Kinga of Poland was the daughter of King Béla IV of Hungary and Maria Laskarina; she is also a saint in the Catholic Church and patroness of Poland and Lithuania. Kinga became princess when her husband ascended the throne as Prince of Cracov. Despite the marriage, the devout couple took up a vow 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.*



Before becoming Pope of the worldwide Roman Catholic community, Karol Wojtyla served as Archbishop of the city of Krakow, today's destination and one of the leading centers of academic, cultural, spiritual and artistic life in Poland. En route we'll stop in 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 Wojtyla 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. We



continue to the Wieliczka Salt Mine, located in the town of Wieliczka. The Wieliczka Salt 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 1% 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." Continue to Krakow for dinner and overnight at the hotel.



### **Day 8: 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.*



Kraków, the former capital of Poland (located 180 miles south of the present capital of Warsaw), is one of the most historic and beautiful cities in the country. Our tour of beautiful Krakow (one of the few Polish cities to escape major devastation during World War II) includes a visit to Kazimierz, the Dominican Church, and 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 Grand Square. The place is always vibrant with life especially in and around the Main Market Square, one of the biggest squares in Europe, which came into existence when the city was given Magdeburg Rights in 1257. 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 (*Kościół Mariacki*), a brick Gothic church re-built in the 14th century (originally built in the early 13th century), adjacent to the Main Market Square and famous for its wooden altarpiece carved by Veit Stoss (*Wit Stwosz*). We can listen to the hymnal played each hour from the highest towers of the church as we explore quaint shops and the many cafes, pubs and restaurants, located in medieval cellars of Old Town with their vaulted ceilings. 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 and monastery. After touring Krakow University where is housed the first map of the world depicting North America as a continent, we'll pass by the shoe factory where young Karol Wojtyla worked during the Nazi occupation of Poland. 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. We'll have some time to explore on our own before visiting the





Franciscan Church (in 1237, the Franciscan Order was established in Krakow) where a monastery was founded and work began on a church in 1260. Here we will celebrate Mass before enjoying dinner at a local restaurant.

### **Day 9: Krakow & Auschwitz Excursion**

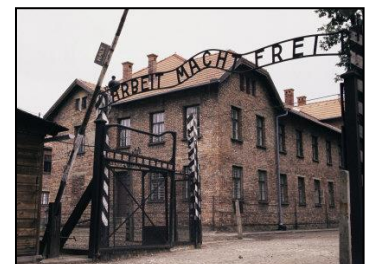
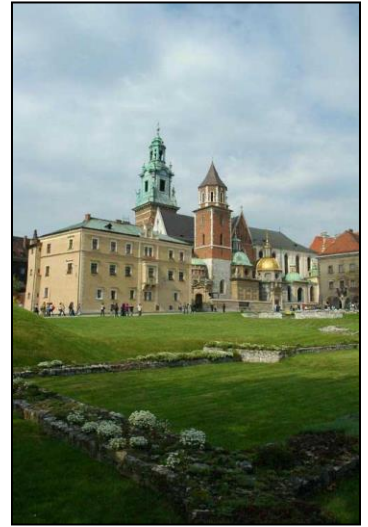
*Since the concentration camps were designed to degrade prisoners beneath human dignity, maintaining the will to survive was seen in itself as an act of rebellion. Primo Levi was taught this lesson by his fellow prisoner and friend Steinlauf who said that "... precisely because the camp was a great machine 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 where we'll enjoy some free time before gathering for dinner at our hotel.

### **Day 10: Krakow, Sr. Faustina & John Paul II Center**

*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. In the late afternoon we 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 11: 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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