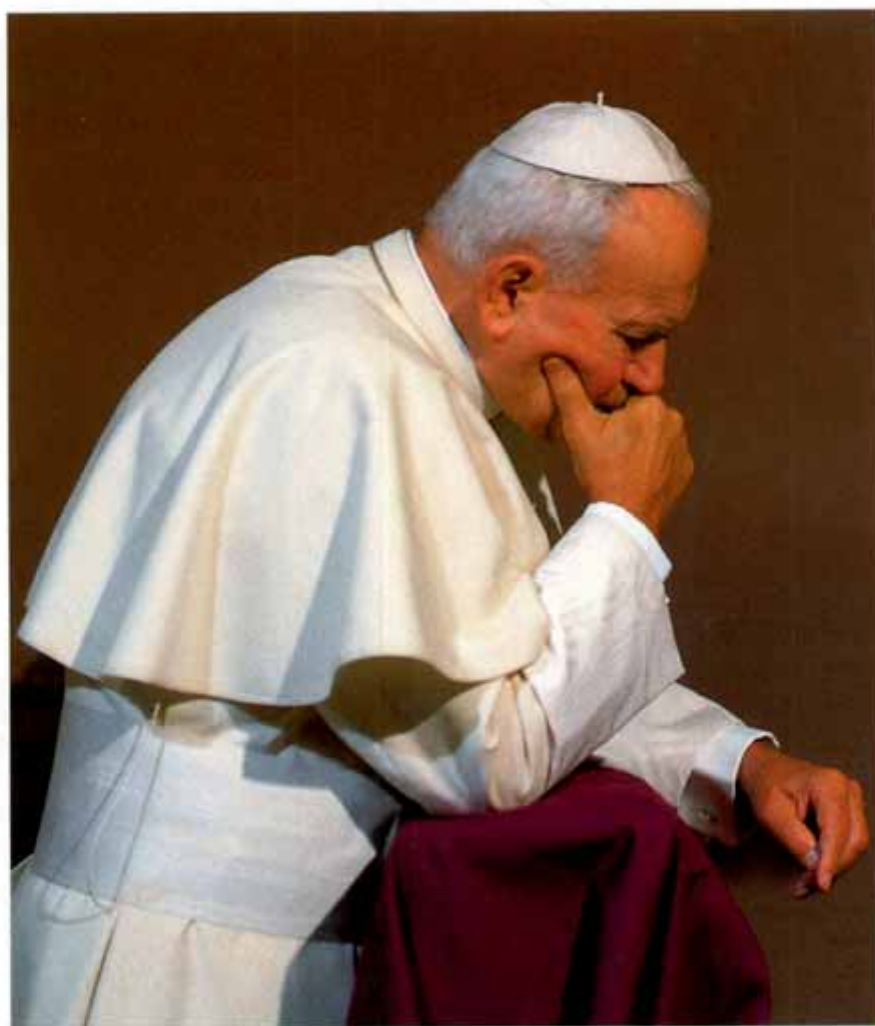


Boundless gift



J o h n P a u l I I
Photographs Adam Bujak

This book is unique not only in the history of the Church, but in the history of literature, too. For the first time a Pope has written his autobiography. The man to make this unprecedented step was John Paul II, the Man from Poland who has never stopped surprising the world..

"All that I have said here doesn't just concern the external events, but reaches down to the roots of my deepest and most personal experiences. I recall them here, but above all I give thanks for them to God: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo* - «I shall sing a song forever unto the Lord, begging Him for mercy» - I offer this record to the priests and People of God, as a testimony of love," John Paul II wrote in the introduction to his autobiographical book entitled *The Gift and the Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Ordination*.

Originally written in Polish (*Dar i Tajemnica...*), this book was composed during the Pope's summer vacations in 1996 (July - September) spent in the Italian Dolomites. It appeared for the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood, which fell on 1st November, 1996.

"If you ask about the story of my vocation to the priesthood, it is a story known above all to God Himself. Every calling to the priesthood is, at its deepest level, a great mystery, a gift that infinitely transcends man. Each of us priests experiences this very distinctly throughout his entire life. In the face of this great gift we always feel just how much we fall short of the mark," writes the Pope at the beginning of his book. It is divided into two parts. In the first, strictly autobiographical, part, John Paul II describes his youth and explains why it was that he became a priest. In the book's second part he shares his observations on the sense and meaning of being a priest. Originally this book was to be entitled *Sacerdos in aeternum* (*A Priest Forever*).

* * *

"We have the right, and the world has the right to ask, «Where did that man named Karol come from, who on the night of 16th October 1978 assumed the name of John Paul the Second?»,» writes Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Metropolitan Archbishop of Cracow, in the introduction to this Album.

Thanks to the courtesy of the Vatican and the Metropolitan Curia of Cracow, exclusive holder of the copyright to the Polish edition of the Pope's autobiography, a collection of 40 extracts has been made for this Album from *The Gift and the Mystery*.

John Paul II's autobiography has been illustrated by the distinguished photographer, Adam Bujak, who has an immense store of photographs of the Pope. His oldest picture of the Pope goes back 33 years. Bujak has photographed Karol Wojtyła thousands of times - as Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal - without realising that he was documenting the life of a future Pontiff. «I am extremely happy to have been able to do this, and to carry on doing this," says Adam Bujak.

With such a cornucopia at hand, the Publishers could hardly have allowed themselves to commit a sin of omission. That's how this Album came into being. The first illustrated autobiography in the history of the Papacy.

The Album *Boundless Gift* begins with the Signs of the Earth, the places in Poland nearest and dearest to the Pope's heart: the mountains he is so fond of - the Beskidy begirding his hometown of Wadowice, Babia Góra a favourite with mountain-trekkers, and his beloved Tatras; the Lakes of Mazuria he has visited so often; and the hilly, forest-covered wilderness of the Bieszczady he has hiked through so many times with friends. The Album closes with panoramic views of the Holy Land and the Sea of Galilee.

"This book [*The Gift and the Mystery*] is extremely interesting, because although the Holy Father's biography is well-known already, this book nevertheless brings new, hitherto unknown details concerning his life."

Cardinal Józef Glemp, Primate of Poland

"I feel sure that through this special testimony by the Pope, many people will be able to discover God's calling and follow Christ, in order to continue His mission of salvation."

Archbishop Crescenzo Sepe,
Secretary of the Congregation
for the Priesthood

"*The Gift and the Mystery* is the Holy Father's personal endeavour to arrive at a synthesis of his pontificate. In it he talks about the things that have been important in his life. He shares his vision and his observation of Man, events, and the world... This is what's striking in the Pope - that special view of things."

Father Wiesław Niewęglowski, National
Chaplain to the People of the Arts, Poland

"There aren't many books I've read from cover to cover in one go without putting them aside on the shelf for a while... This account describes the wonderful presence of God in the life of the man named Karol Wojtyła from the aspect of the history of salvation. What you get is a picture as clear as day of how God can prepare a person and lead him in a given direction. This is a book which will strengthen the faith, since it well-nigh tangibly touches on the presence of God in a human life."

Archbishop Henryk Muszyński,
Metropolitan Archbishop of Gniezno

"The astonishing and characteristic feature of these first-ever autobiographical reminiscences and reflections by a Pope in the history of the church is the extraordinary simplicity and modesty of the style in which the greatest Polishman of contemporary times talks about his life."

The "Rzeczpospolita" newspaper

"This is a book for everyone. It can be read just as easily by a university professor as by a housewife. It's not a book of memoirs, it's not a diary. It's a book that sets out to explain the gift and the mystery of priesthood."

Tomasz Wołek,
Chief Editor of the newspaper "Życie"

"This is a fundamental work, which will continue to be an extremely important document for all times."

Father Mieczysław Maliński,
John Paul II's biographer

"In our times there'll never be anyone quite like him again."

Tad Szulc,
Author of the book *John Paul II: A Biography*

cover photographs:

I. His Holiness Pope John Paul II in Wadowice Parish Church, 1991

II. Interior of Wawel Cathedral, 1997

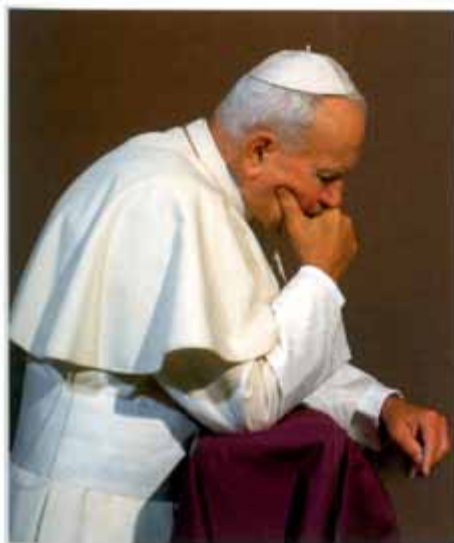
Motto

*At the close of the second millennium, perhaps more than at any time before, we need the words of the Risen Christ: „Do not be afraid!“ Mankind, who even after the fall of Communism has not ceased to be afraid and who has many reasons to be afraid, is in need of these words. These words are needed by the nations, those nations who have been reborn after the fall of the empire of communism, but also by those nations whose part in these events has been from the outside. These words are needed by all the nations and peoples of the world. *It is necessary for them to realize again and again that there is Someone Who holds sway over the fate of this transient world, Someone Who has the keys of Death and Hades (cf Rev.1.18.), Someone Who is the Alpha and Omega of Man`s history (cf. Rev. 22. 13.), both his individual history and his collective history. That Someone is Love (1Jn 4. 8-16), Love made human, Love crucified and resurrected, Love perpetually present among Mankind. He is the Eucharistic Love. He is the endless source of communion. He alone has the full authority to say: „Do not be afraid!“(...)**

(...) It is extremely important to cross the threshold of hope, not to stop before it, but to allow oneself to be conducted. (...)

John Paul II,

To Cross the Threshold of Hope



On the occasion of the Ninth Centenary Jubilee of St. Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracow and Martyr, in a poem entitled „Stanisław", Cardinal Karol Wojtyła put the following question:

From where came that name which he received for the people,
for his parents, for his family, for his Bishop's See of Cracow,
for the King Boleslaus known as the Bold and the Generous,
for the twentieth century?
That name.

We too, and the people living in the Church, have the right to ask, „From where did the name KAROL (Carolus, Charles) come ?" From baptism: it was under that name that he lived as a child, a boy, a young man, at Wadowice, before he set out for Cracow by way of the road through Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Known by that name he made his way through the Jagiellonian University, the Solvay Soda Works and the Theological Seminary. At his ordination Cardinal Sapieha confirmed that name; the newly ordained priest who left the Cardinal's chapel was named Father Karol Wojtyła. Twelve years later, in the Cathedral on Wawel Hill, that priest was consecrated Bishop, Bishop Karol.

We have the right, and the world has the right to ask: „Where did that man named Karol come from, who on the night of 16th October 1978 assumed the name of JOHN PAUL THE SECOND?"

The Holy Father gives us an answer. He comes to us - in this album thanks to Maestro Adam Bujak - just as he was and as he is, the same face and figure, the smile and the look of reflection, of being absorbed by the infinitude of God which is a closeness, of being turned towards that closeness, and through his expression and gestures of being turned towards Man, who is so close to his love and respect.

The Holy Father comes to us with his words, testimony of himself and to God and the people within his environment. He utters a word of confession revealing the story of his life and soul on its road to the priesthood and of his first years as a priest. But it is harder and harder for words to win Man, so perhaps a testimony will convert him?

Cardinal Karol Wojtyła asked of Bishop Stanislaus: „From where came that name which he received for the people?" We are searching for the answer to the question from where that man named Karol came to us, whose name Karol was transformed into John Paul the Second. He himself asked about the man named Stanisław, who was a *gift* - for his parents, for his countrymen, for Cracow. He asked where that name had come from which he had received for the TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Please look and see what the pictures and the words of John Paul the Second tell you, what he, a BOUNDLESS GIFT, has to tell you, the generations of the Church and the world.

+ Franciszek kard. Machanek

Cracow, 2nd February 1997

Preface by the Bishop of Cracow

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