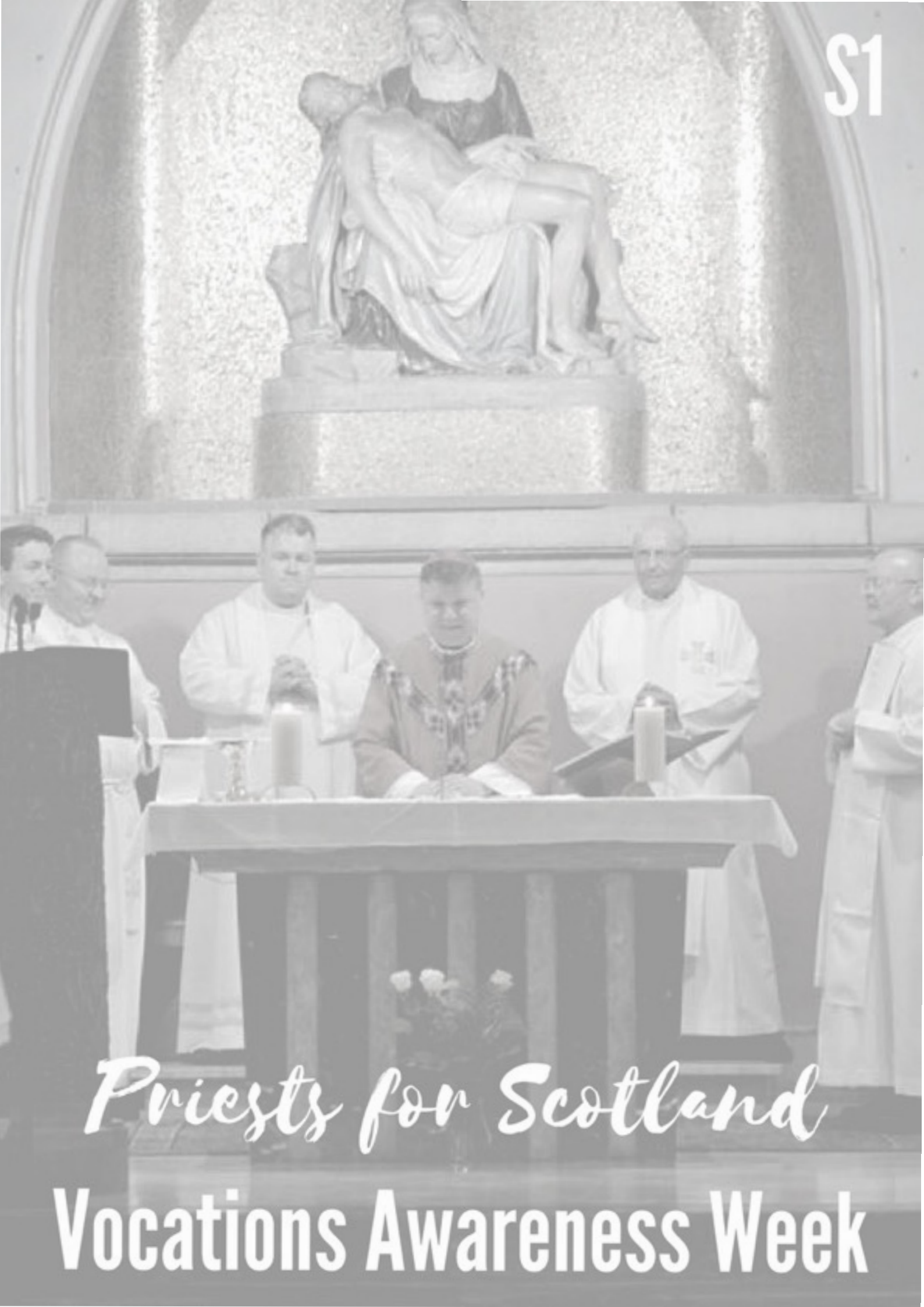


\$1



Priests for Scotland

Vocations Awareness Week

John Paul II: A Life Less Ordinary

Introduction

This week the Catholic Church in Scotland celebrates Vocations Awareness Week. 'Vocation' means calling, specifically a calling from God. Each year, during Vocations Awareness week, we will consider the lives of six people – three men and three women who responded to God's call with generosity, courage and determination.

In S1 we consider the life, vocation and legacy of John Paul II.

The Background

John Paul II was born in Wadowice, Poland in 1929. He wasn't of course called John Paul II at that time! He was born Karol Józef Wojtyła. He was the youngest of three children born to Karol and Emilia Wojtyła – Olga and Edmund being his older sister and brother.

'A Great Sadness'

Before Karol was born his sister Olga had already died. When he was only 8, Emilia, his mother also died. When he was 12 he also lost Edmund, his brother. Edmund was a doctor and caught a disease when working with the sick. When he was just about to begin his studies for the priesthood, Karol's father also passed away. By the time he was 20, Karol had lost all his immediate family. Just after he became Pope, Karol reflected that "At twenty, I had already lost all the people I loved. In a special way, God became my Father, Mary became my mother and all God's people-became my brothers and sisters".

A Popular Kid

Despite the great difficulties Karol had at home, it seems that he was immensely popular at school. He was nicknamed 'Lolek' which means 'free man' or, better, 'free spirit'. The name perhaps indicates that he didn't always follow the school rules! It seems that Karol found it very easy to make friends from a variety of backgrounds – indeed many of his best friends were Jewish.

Karol's Got Talent

Young Karol was blessed with a great many talents and gifts. According to his friends, he was a very good goalkeeper! He was also really keen on drama and starred in many school productions. A member of ski-ing and hillwalking clubs, Karol had a real talent for learning other languages. By the time, he left school he could speak twelve languages!

Accident Prone

Karol developed a reputation from being very accident prone. While in school, he was involved in many accidents. Some of these accidents could have easily endangered his life. In later years, he commented "Yes things always seemed to happen to me but I was always aware of God love and care in my life".

For Reflection

1. 'A Great Sadness'

Karol lost all his immediate family by the time he was twenty years old. This experience seemed to deepen his faith in God. Does this surprise you? Why do you think these events seemed to strengthen his faith?

2. A Popular Kid

As you read this, you're probably still in the first few weeks of Secondary School. Have you made any new friends? What have you found about them? What qualities do they have that you admire and respect?

3. Karol's Got Talent

Karol had a lot of gifts and talents. What talents and gifts do you have?

4. Accident Prone!

Karol always had a sense of God's love and care in his life. Have you ever been aware of God's love in your life? Think about the day you received your First Holy Communion. What did that day mean to you?

John Paul II: A Life Less Ordinary

The Call

In 1996, Pope John Paul II published a book called 'Gift and Mystery'. In this book, he explained why he became a priest. In the book, John Paul II speaks about five factors that played a big role in him becoming a priest!

The Family

John Paul II was from a very religious family. He often spoke about the great faith shown by his father. The family attended Mass together, prayed the rosary every day and often went on pilgrimage.

Brother Albert

Growing up, one of John Paul II's great heroes was a Polish man called Brother Albert. Albert wasn't a priest but a member of a religious order. Before joining the Church, Albert had worked as an actor and was a famous painter. He gave all of this up to help the poor. Such was John Paul II's admiration for Brother Albert that he made him a Saint in 1989!

The War

Soon after John Paul II finished High School, the Second War began. The part of Poland where John Paul lived was occupied by the Nazis. Many of John Paul's Jewish friends were sent to Concentration Camps. Courageously, John Paul helped Polish Jews escape the Nazis including a 12 year old girl and a two year old boy. Reflecting on his experiences, John Paul II said the Nazi Occupation of Poland was a 'time of great evil but a time during which he became aware of the truth that everyone is made in the image of God'.

The Saints

Through friends, John Paul II was introduced to the writings of the Saints. Two saints, in particular, had a great influence on him - St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

For Reflection

1. The Family

John Paul's family played a major role in decision to become a priest. Is there someone in your family who inspires you to grow in your faith? Is there someone in your school or your parish who you think has a deep faith?

2. Brother Albert

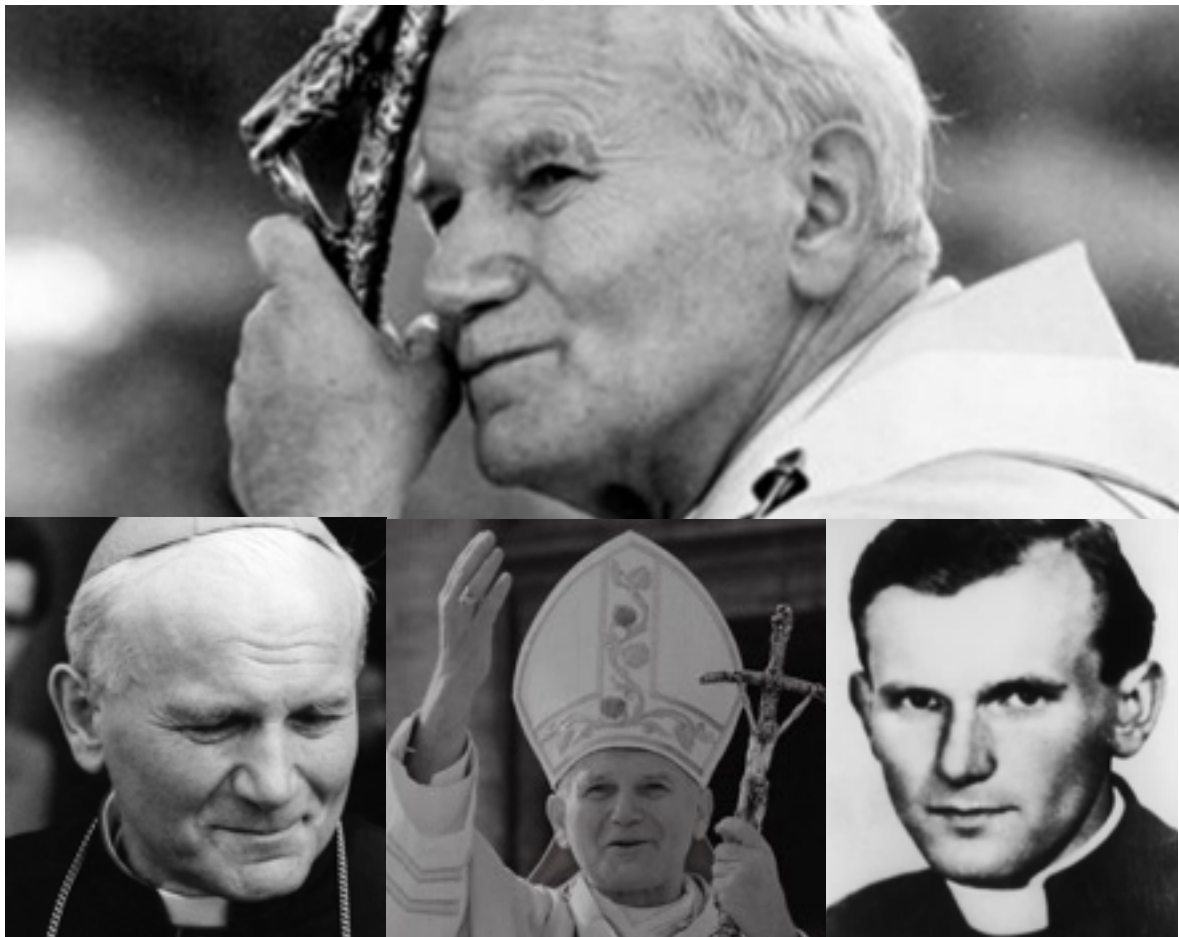
John Paul was inspired by the example of Brother Albert, a man who served the poor. Is there someone in your life, your family or your school who inspires you be a better person?

3. The War

John Paul's actions in helping Polish Jews could have resulted in his imprisonment and execution. Do you think you could show that kind of bravery? Can you 'see the image and likeness of God' in everyone you meet? Why do you think this is important?

4. The Saints

John Paul II was inspired by the lives of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Are there any Saints who inspire you? What was your confirmation name?



John Paul II: The Call Answered

Training for the Priesthood...In Secret

Shortly after the death of his father, Karol started his training for the priesthood. His training, however, had to be done in secret due to the Nazi occupation. When the Nazi occupation ended in 1945, a communist regime was installed by Russian forces. Training for the priesthood, however, remained difficult for Karol. The communists were opposed to the freedom of worship and of religion. Karol was ordained a priest in 1946 just after the end of the Second World War.

Bishop

After spending 12 years as a priest, Karol was elected as the Bishop of Krakow. At the age of 38 he was the youngest Bishop of Poland! At that time, however, it was very difficult to be a Catholic in Poland. The ruling Communist Party, which didn't permit any elections, made it difficult for the Church to properly function. People who attended Church were often discriminated against and human rights were severely limited.

Election As Pope

In 1967, Pope Paul VI appointed Karol as a Cardinal. This meant he was now able to take part in the process of electing the Pope. In 1979, following the sudden death of Pope John Paul I, he was elected Pope. When elected Pope, Karol took the name John Paul II out of respect for his predecessor. John Paul II was the first non-Italian Pope in 450 years!

The Return to Poland

During his pontificate, Pope John Paul II made trips to 129 countries, travelling more than 1,100,000 kilometres (680,000 mi) while doing so. He consistently attracted large crowds, some among the largest ever assembled in human history. One of his important trips was his return to Poland as Pope June 1979. This was possibly the most significant of all his trips as it, according to many historians, set in train a series of events that led to the fall of Communist dictatorships throughout Eastern Europe.

The Assassination Attempt

In 1981, Pope John Paul was shot by a gunman in St. Peter's Square in Rome. Shot twice at close range, the Pope was seriously injured and lost almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of his blood. The gunman, Ali Agca, was quickly apprehended by the authorities. After John Paul recovered, he visited Agca in prison and forgave him. John Paul always credited Our Lady with saving his life.

Visit to the United Kingdom 1982

In 1982, Pope John Paul became the first Pope to visit the United Kingdom. The Pope met with 45,000 young people at Murrayfield Stadium on May 31st. The Pope's speech was interrupted by applause, cheering and singing. There were several renditions of 'You'll Never Walk Alone"! John Paul, however, didn't seem too worried about not being able to deliver his homily. On Tuesday 1st June John said Mass at Bellahouston Park in Glasgow in front of 300,000 people! At Bellahouston, the Pope was presented with several symbolic gifts, including a pipe banner with the Pope's coat of arms, a piece of Caithness glass, a firkin of whisky and a Scotland football shirt!

The Great Jubilee

The year 2000 was a major event for Christians world-wide. John Paul II attended many events which marked the immense contribution of Christianity to the world. For John Paul II, the Jubilee was a time to celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness.

The Last Days

Throughout 2004 and 2005, John Paul's health began to steadily decline. In late March of 2005, reports began to emerge that the Pope was nearing death. Spontaneously crowds of people, many of them young, began to assemble in St. Peter's Square. Upon hearing of this, the dying pope is said to have stated: "I have searched for you, and now you have come to search for me. I thank you." On Saturday, 2 April 2005, at approximately 2:30pm, John Paul II spoke his final words "Allow me to depart to the house of the Father" and fell into a coma about four hours later. The Pope died in his private apartment at 8.37pm. John Paul II had been Pope for almost 27 years – the third longest serving Pope in history!

For Reflection/Discussion

1. Training in Secret

Carried out in secret, John Paul's preparation for the Priesthood was very unusual! Can you find out how men are prepared for the Priesthood today? Check out the website of the Scots College in Rome!

2. Bishop

Find out the difference between a priest and a bishop! Have you ever met a Bishop? What was the occasion?

3. Election as Pope

Do you know how Popes are elected?

4. The Return to Poland

When John Paul II returned to Poland, many of his fellow Poles were still being persecuted for their faith. Sadly, Christians are still persecuted throughout the world. Where are Christians in danger at this time? Find out about the work of Aid to the Church in Need!

5. The Assassination Attempt

John Paul forgave the man who shot at him. Would you find it easy to forgive someone who hurt you?

6. Visit to the United Kingdom 1982

When John Paul II visited Scotland, his first engagement was with the young people of this country. Why do you think he wanted to see them first? Why did he make them a priority?

7. The Great Jubilee

For John Paul II, the year 2000 was a time to celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness. How we celebrate forgiveness? Do you find easy or difficult to forgive? Do you find it hard or easy to forgive yourself when you make mistakes?

8. The Last Days

Last words often sum up a person's life and work. John Paul's last words demonstrated his faith and trust in God. Can you sum up in a phrase or statement the things that matter to you?



John Paul II: Key Ideas

"Do not be afraid!"

John Paul II was painfully aware of the challenges many people have in living out their faith. Inspired by his own personal experience, he always encouraged believers to hear again the words of Jesus "Do not be afraid!"

The Importance of Young People in the Church

John Paul II had a deep love and compassion for young people. He had great faith in the love, joy and energy of young people.

Faith

John Paul II always said that faith wasn't opposed to reason. For him, there was no disconnect between being religious and believing in scientific progress. He said that faith without science was blind and that science, without faith, can forget its true purpose – to help human beings grow in wisdom and love!

Saying Sorry

John Paul II frequently said sorry for mistakes made by the Church throughout its history. In his understanding, a Church that can't say sorry isn't really a Church inspired by Jesus.

Our Lady - 'All Yours'

John Paul II had a great devotion to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, as Pope, his motto was 'Totus Tuus' ('All yours'). He dedicated his life and ministry to Mary. He saw in her the best example of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Extension Tasks

#gosee

Karol is a film about the life of John Paul II. Why don't you watch it?

#gomeet

Pope John Paul II had a truly incredible vocation story. Why don't you invite your school chaplain to come to into your class and tell you the story of his vocation?

#goprayer

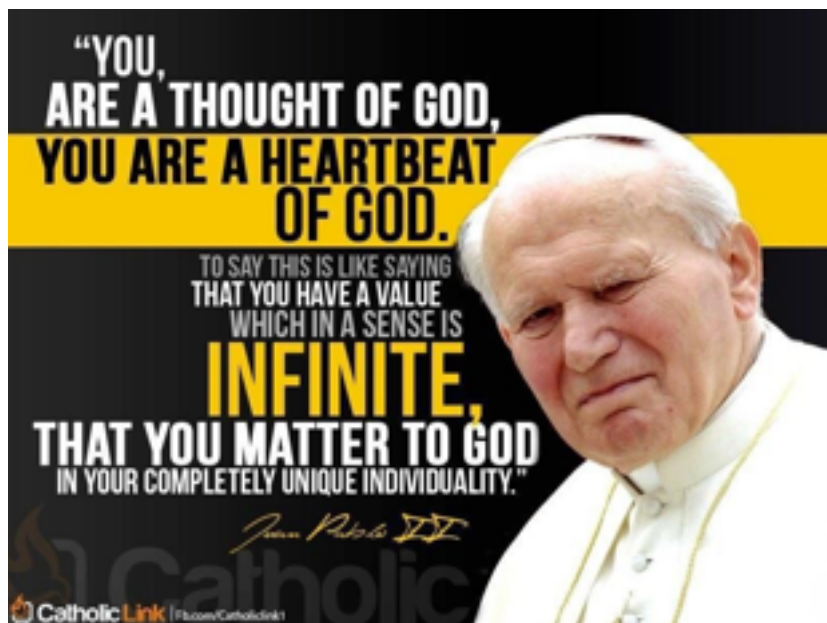
Pope John Paul II had a great devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. We're told he said the Rosary at least once a day. Why doesn't you class say a decade of the Rosary together?

#godiscover

Pope John Paul II was from Poland. What you can find out about Poland?

#godraw

Can you colour in this picture of John Paul II. Perhaps on the back you can write down some of the things you have learned about his life.





Pope Saint John Paul II

Canonization, April 27, 2011

