

## Introduction

The pilgrimages of John Paul II have fascinated many from the very beginning. This includes individuals in the Church community as well as laypeople. There had never been a Pope before who had traveled to so many distant places around the world. “I come here as a Pilgrim Pope”. Thank you for inviting me as a Pilgrim.” Such were the words used by John Paul II upon arrival in many countries and regions of the world. He perceived his travels as “apostolic pilgrimages” and “pilgrimages of faith”. Academics, biographers, and the Holy Father himself have also used many other terms to describe these papal pilgrimages. They are certainly a unique phenomenon in modern Church history and the history of the Papacy. The apostolic travels of the Holy Father became key events of his Pontificate. No Pope in the history of the Church prior to John Paul II had traveled so frequently.

According to official Vatican documents, the Holy Father John Paul II made a total of 104 foreign trips during his Pontificate. He visited over 130 countries and over 900 towns. His first trip was to Latin America (January 1979). His last trip was to Lourdes (August 15–16, 2004). The Pope visited some countries several times. Poland had the rare privilege of hosting the Pontiff eight times.

Major celebrations hosted by the Pope were attended by hundreds of thousands of people – in some cases, millions – both locals and foreigners who had traveled from far away. Every place where John Paul II arrived became the most important center of pilgrimage in the world on that day, in that moment. What made such moments special was the unforgettable atmosphere, something rarely found during “regular” religious celebrations. The Pope’s pilgrimages offered everyone a sense of hope and solidarity during the Communist era in Poland.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Paul II’s first pilgrimage to Poland came in June 2009. The significance of that journey in the history of the Polish nation and the history of modern Europe is something that we have not been able to fully comprehend to this day. Looking at it from a human perspective, it gave the nation the strength it needed to abolish the Communist system in Europe. The spiritual dimension of the trip is more difficult to measure, however, certainly the trip must have

made everyone aware of the existence of Providence. More and more theological and sociological analyses are being published on the different spiritual dimensions of that first pilgrimage.

On the occasion of this special jubilee, the editors of the *Peregrinus Cracoviensis* have prepared a monograph dedicated to the Polish pilgrimages of John Paul II. We would like to remind Readers, especially the younger generation, of the characteristic nature of these pilgrimages. We would also like to use this publication as a means to imprint the memory of a special pilgrim – John Paul II – in the minds of the people of Poland. This is our second volume dedicated to the travels of the Holy Father. The first volume was published in 1997 and was called *John Paul II – a Pilgrim Among Pilgrims (Peregrinus Cracoviensis, vol. 5)*. We had the great honor and privilege to be able to present that volume to the Pope during his visit at the Jagiellonian University in 1997. We remain committed to this subject and this volume is simply the next installment.

A much less important anniversary here is our very own little jubilee. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Peregrinus Cracoviensis*, which has been published continuously since 1995. We would like to use this occasion to thank all Colleagues and Authors, thanks to whom our periodical has received broad recognition both domestically and abroad. We would also like to thank the previous and current leadership of the Jagiellonian University, the Department of Biology and Earth Sciences, and the Institute of Geography and Spatial Management for the support they have provided us with over the years.

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