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"Enter into Christ with your whole life"

Video message of Pope Francis
to young people for the
centenary of Saint John Paul II's
birth.

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Dear young people,

This year we celebrate one hundred
years since the birth of Saint John
Paul II. It is a beautiful occasion for
me to speak to you, young people of
Krakow, thinking of how much he
loved the young, and recalling my

visit to you on World Youth Day in 2016.

Saint John Paul II was an extraordinary gift from God to the Church and to Poland, your homeland. His earthly pilgrimage, which began on 18 May 1920 in Wadowice and ended fifteen years ago in Rome, was marked by passion for life and fascination with the mystery of God, the world and man.

I remember him as a great man of mercy: I think of the Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, of the canonisation of Saint Faustina and of the institution of Divine Mercy Sunday. In the light of God's merciful love he grasped the specific nature and the beauty of the vocation of women and men, he understood the needs of children, young people and adults, also considering cultural and social conditioning. Everyone was able to experience this. You too, today, can

experience it, by knowing his life and his teachings, available to all thanks to the internet. Every one of you, dear boys and girls, bears the imprint of his or her own family, with its joys and sufferings. Love and care for the family is a typical characteristic of John Paul II. His teaching represents a sure point of reference to find concrete solutions to the difficulties and challenges that the family must face in our times (see *Message to the Congress “John Paul II, the Pope of the family”*, Rome, 30 October 2019).

But personal and family problems are not an obstacle on the way of holiness and happiness. Nor were they for young Karol Wojtyła, who suffered the loss of his mother, brother and father as a boy. As a student he experienced the atrocities of Nazism, which took so many friends away from him. After the

war, as a priest and bishop he had to face atheistic communism.

Difficulties, even harsh ones, are a test of maturity and faith; a test that can only be overcome by relying on the power of Christ, who died and rose again. John Paul II reminded the whole Church of this from his first Encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, in which he says: “The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly ... must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self” (no. 10).

Dear young people, this is what I wish for each of you: to enter into Christ with your whole life. And I hope that the celebrations of the centenary of the birth of Saint John Paul II will inspire in you the desire to walk courageously with Jesus, who

is “The Lord of risk ... the Lord of the eternal ‘more’. ... As He did on Pentecost, the Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; He wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands, boys and girls, He wants your hands to continue building the world of today” (*Address at the Prayer Vigil on the occasion of World Youth Day, Krakow, 30 July 2016*).

I entrust you all to the intercession of Saint John Paul II and I bless you all with all my heart. And you, please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!