Pope John Paul II
Related Activities for Preschool Through Grade 8

Preschool: Show children a picture of Pope John Paul II in the early-to-mid-years of his papacy, when he was looking grandfatherly, but still healthy. Introduce Pope John Paul II as a very special person who has many names. Ask the children to repeat each name after you: Pope, John, Paul. Explain that the number II stands for “the second” and means that he is the second pope to be named John Paul.

Explain that, in Rome, where the pope lives, people call the pope “Papa.” Invite children to greet the man in the picture by saying, “Hello, Papa!” Ask: What does the name papa mean to you? Do you call anyone “papa”? Make sure children know that papa means “father.” Explain that the pope is the father of all Catholics. The pope is also called “the Holy Father.” Holy means he is close to God and shows us how to be close to God, too.

Ask: What are some things fathers do? (work, fix things, guide, teach, pray) Allow time for children to answer. Then ask, Could the pope do some of the things that fathers do for us?

Invite the children to greet the Pope again by saying, “Hello, Pope John Paul II.” Explain that soon Pope John Paul II is going to be given another name. He is going to be named a saint, which means a very holy person. He will be called St. Pope John Paul II. Invite the children to greet him again by saying, “Hello, St. Pope John Paul II!”
Grades K-1: Show children a picture of Pope John Paul II. Ask the children if they can identify the person in the picture. If necessary, tell them that this man is Blessed Pope John Paul II. Then tell them that the pope is the head of the Catholic Church on earth. Pope John Paul II is called blessed because he was a very holy and good man; he loved God and other people. He loved to pray and to study, and he also loved to participate in sports. He showed us that God made us to do good things with our bodies and with our souls.

Have the children stand in a circle large enough to allow space for them to spread their arms. Demonstrate the following action rhyme.

This is my body (Pat the front of your legs with both hands.)
as you can see. (Spread your arms out on both sides of your body.)
I have a soul, too, (Cross your arms over your chest so each hand is touching the opposite shoulder.)
deep inside of me. (With your arms crossed over your chest and your hands resting on your shoulders, make a deep, reverent bow.)

Help the children learn the words and actions. Then invite the children to take turns acting out some of the things they like to do, first naming the action and then acting it out. Take note of the activities they mention and mention some of them in the next step. With the children, recite the first two lines of the action rhyme and invite the children to add actions for each activity.

This is my body
as you can see.
Pope John Paul liked to swim.
Pope John Paul liked to ski.
Pope John Paul liked to play soccer.

Then ask children to name and act out ways in which they show they are caring and loving children. Take note of the actions they mention and mention some of them in the second part of the rhyme.

I have a soul, too,
deep inside of me.
Pope John Paul prayed.
Pope John Paul showed how much he loved people.
Pope John Paul helped others.

With each part of the rhyme, use as many actions as time allows.
**Grades 2-3:** Help children learn more about Pope John Paul II by studying his coat of arms. [Click here](#) for an image you can print out. Provide a copy for each child. Children will also need crayons or colored pencils.

Explain that a coat of arms is a drawing that tells a story about the person it represents. This coat of arms is for Pope John Paul II, but other popes, kings and queens, countries, and even families have a coat of arms.

Share with children what Pope John Paul's coat of arms tells us.

The **crown and the keys** represent the authority that Jesus gave St. Peter, our first pope. Jesus told St. Peter, “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19). Pope John Paul was the successor the St. Peter.

The **cross** is a symbol for Jesus. Like Jesus, Pope John Paul was the shepherd for the whole Church.

The **capital letter M** represents Jesus’ mother, Mary, who was important to the life and mission of Jesus. Pope John Paul was deeply devoted to Mary. Invite children to follow these steps to color the coat of arms.

1. Color the crown light blue, with gold and red trimming.
2. Color one key silver and one key gold.
3. Color the cord that connects the keys red.
4. Color the ribbons coming out of the crown red.
5. Color the cross and the M gold or yellow.
6. Color the background behind the cross blue.

Encourage children to take the completed coat of arms home and share with their families what each of the symbols means.
Two Popes – Two Saints

Grades 4-6: Ask children if it would surprise them to learn that a pope liked to ski. When everyone who wishes to has responded, explain that skiing was one of Pope John Paul’s favorite activities. Share this story. Before John Paul became pope, someone once asked him if it was becoming, or fitting, for a cardinal to ski. He answered that it would be unbecoming for a cardinal to ski poorly.

As a boy, when he was known as Karol Wojtyla, John Paul enjoyed swimming, skiing, and soccer—he was a goalkeeper. As a young priest, he often led groups of students on hiking trips that always included plenty of time for prayer and singing hymns. On the day he was named a bishop, he was on a canoe trip with friends. Even as pope, he took vacations in the mountains to hike and ski. Ask the children how they think Pope John Paul’s active lifestyle and his spirituality helped him to stay close to God.

Have children form groups of three or four students. Allow them to choose the members of their groups on their own but remind them to be sure not to leave anyone out. Ask each group to work together to compile a list of things they carry in their backpacks. Have groups bring their lists to you as they finish. To avoid repetition or inappropriateness, quickly look at each list and circle or highlight one or two items. Keep a list of the items that you selected. Return the lists and ask the groups to write short prayers for each of the items you circled. Their focus should be on how each object can help them to walk with Jesus every day. Explain that groups will be asked to share their prayers with the class. Give the groups index cards on which to write their prayers, and ask each group to choose readers for their prayers. When all the groups have finished, allow time for them to share their prayers.

You may wish to read some of these prayers aloud to help children get started.

Cell Phone
Lord, help us to tune out distractions in our lives, and find quiet time to talk and listen to you.

Day Planner or Calendar
Lord, help us to seek your plan for us instead of telling you what we want and where we want to be.

Mirror
Lord, please help us look inside each person instead of being concerned about outward appearances.

Money
Lord, please help us to realize that the real value of something is not always measured by how much it costs.
Grades 7-8: Remind students that the most recent World Youth Day took place in July of 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Invite students to share what they heard about the event.

Explain that World Youth Day is a celebration of faith, hope, finding strength in numbers, and commitment to Jesus Christ and his Church. Though each event differs according to its location, each celebration of World Youth Day includes a theme from Scripture, a Mass celebrated with the pope, Stations of the Cross, music and programs, opportunities for Reconciliation, sharing experiences with other young Catholics from around the world, and opportunities to learn about other cultures. World Youth Day has been held in Rome (Italy); Buenos Aires (Argentina); Santiago de Compostela (Spain); Czestochowa (Poland); Denver (Colorado); Manila (Philippines); Paris (France); Toronto (Canada); Cologne (Germany); Sydney (Australia); Madrid (Spain); Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

Share with students what Pope John Paul II said in an address during the arrival ceremony at the Toronto International Airport on July 23, 2002. Young people from all parts of the world are gathering for the World Youth Day. With their gifts of intelligence and heart they represent the future of the world. But they also bear the marks of a humanity that too often does not know peace, or justice. Too many lives begin and end without joy, without hope. That is one of the principal reasons for the World Youth Day. Young people are coming together to commit themselves, in the strength of their faith in Jesus Christ, to the great cause of peace and human solidarity.

Invite Visions students to work in small groups to help plan a future World Youth Day. Provide each group with a copy of the Pope’s words to young people in Toronto and a list of cities in which World Youth Day has taken place. In the list, include Kraków, Poland, the site chosen for World Youth Day in 2016. Ask the groups to consider these questions: What city would your group pick for World Youth Day? Why? What message would your group want to present to young people? If computer access is available, groups can go to http://www.worldyouthday.com/ to find the themes for past World Youth Days. Or, if computer access is not available, remind the students of the theme for World Youth Day, July 2013: “Go and Make Disciples of All Nations” (Matthew 28:19).

When the groups have finished their World Youth Day plans, tell the students that when he was their age, Karol Wojtyla enjoyed acting in school performances and later wrote several plays. Then ask each group to write an outline of a short play to illustrate their World Youth Day message. Allow time for each group to share their outline. Volunteers may want to work together to expand one of the outlines into a play that they can perform at a future meeting.