



The pope recuperating from gunshot wounds in the attempted 1981 assassination.

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Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter on the Christian meaning of suffering, released Feb. 10, was written by a man who is no stranger to sorrow and pain.

By the time Karol Wojtyla, the future pope, was 20 years old, he had come to grips with the deaths of his three closest relatives.

When he was almost nine years old, his mother died. His brother Edmund, a doctor, died of scarlet fever when Karol was 12. His father, with whom he shared an apartment in Cracow, Poland, died when he was 20.

Friends describe Wojtyla, on the night of his father's death, kneeling for 12 hours in prayer and grief at the bedside of the man who had been his closest companion and strongest influence.

Friends also describe the young Wojtyla as athletic, witty and friendly, but with a pensive and meditative side deepened by the struggles with tragedy.

Added to the losses of the three people closest to him, were the hardships placed on Wojtyla by the political situation during his youth.

At dawn on Sept. 1, 1939, the German blitzkrieg smashed through Poland. Several hours later, Wojtyla, then a 19-year-old university student, walked through smoking rubble to assist at Mass in his parish church. The Nazis closed the University of Cracow, so Wojtyla, several classmates and a few teachers continued their courses in secret, slipping individually into houses to meet and hold classes in hushed tones.

Later, during the war, Wojtyla worked in a stone quarry and a chemical plant while attending seminary classes clandestinely.

The Communist takeover of Poland after the war extended the repression of the Polish people. In 1948, as a student priest in Rome, the man who would later become pope decided to return to his homeland after Polish Communist leaders had arrested 700 priests.

Later, as archbishop of Cracow, Wojtyla constantly did battle with government officials who prohibited parochial schools, opposed the formation of Catholic lay groups and severely restricting church use of the media.

Yet throughout his years as a priest in Poland, Wojtyla preserved his blend of the carefree and the profound. He hiked, camped, canoed and skied with student groups, entertaining them with a guitar at campfires but engaging them also in serious philosophical and religious discussions.

# NO STRANGER TO SUFFERING

## Apostolic Letter on Pain Written by John Paul II

For all of the hardships which have dotted his history, the event which prompted the pope to reflect most of all on suffering was probably the attempt on his life in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981.

Seriously wounded by a bullet which sliced through his intestines, the pope spent nearly 100 days in a Rome hospital.

The pope has said that his concern for the sick and the suffering intensified following his own brush with death. Last September in Vienna, Austria, he shared with a group of invalids his own experience and said that through the wonders of medicine, he was standing before them "as a healthy man, but not as a stranger."

The experiences and reflections of the 63-year-old pope are wrapped together in his new 16,000-word apostolic letter, "On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering."

The pope's document is a closely reasoned and deeply philosophical essay.

In summary, it says that suffering enters everyone's life. It can be viewed as pointless, and thus lead to frustration. Or it can be seen as positive because:

- It can lead the one afflicted to a deeper union with God and secure God's blessings for other people.
- It offers people the chance to be kind to those who suffer.

In this sense, the pope said, "suffering is something good before which the church bows down in reverence."

The fact that suffering can be viewed as good does not mean that a person should acquiesce in the presence of suffering and do nothing to relieve it, however. The pope points out that some types of suffering are directly caused by human depravity, such as war, and people should do all in their power to eradicate them.

But even after all these efforts, the pope suggested in the apostolic letter, some suffering will still exist: physical pain and the "moral pain" which comes from such things as loss of loved ones, the lack of basic freedoms, loneliness or anxiety over the future. His letter is an instructional booklet on how to use such situations positively.

In the letter, the pope shows great sympathy for those who find suffering difficult to comprehend.

"Almost always, the individual enters suffering with a typically human protest and with the question 'why,'" the letter said.

The very struggle itself to grapple for understanding and the feeling that one's suffering might be useless, are themselves a part of the pain, the pope added.

For the person mired in such anxiety, Christianity offers a new insight, said the letter. The life of Christ shows how

suffering can be linked to love and to triumph. And integral to Christian faith is the belief that Christ's redemption is still going on, that it is being applied to new individuals and new situations each day because there are people offering their sufferings for others.

The person who sees with this insight, suggested the pope, can be certain that "he is serving, like Christ, the salvation of his brothers and sisters" and that he is "carrying out an irreplaceable service."

An emphasis on this thesis, that those who suffer can help others, has been a constant in Pope John Paul's pontificate. Within 24 hours of his election in 1978 he went to see a friend, Polish Archbishop Andrzej Deskur, in a Rome hospital. There the new pope told a group of patients that he was entrusting the success of his pontificate to the prayers of those who are sick and suffering.

Last Jan. 11, the pope asked the sick during a Wednesday general audience "to offer to the Lord your sufferings for peace among people, for the return of God to those who do not know him, who do not believe in him or fight him, and so that there will be no more war on earth, above all so that the world may be spared the trial of nuclear conflict."

Another benefit of suffering, said the pope's apostolic letter, is the time which it often gives for meditative thought.

"In suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace," he said.

He also noted that "it is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls."

By showing perseverance under suffering, the pope said, "the individual unleashes hope." This was an echo of his words in Austria last September, when he asked the sick to "teach us, the healthy, to accept it (the cross) in good time and to bear it with courage, everyone in his own way."

As to the responsibility of other people when confronted with those who are suffering, the pope's words were strong and clear. He said that, like the Good Samaritan, we must "stop beside the suffering of another person, whatever form it takes." Sympathy and compassion, he added, are not enough. There must be "activity aimed at bringing help."

The pope brought his lesson to a close at the end of his letter.

"At one and the same time Christ has taught man to do good by his suffering and to do good to those who suffer," he said.

"In this double aspect, he has completely revealed the meaning of suffering," concluded the pope.

## 24 Projects to Be Funded By Communications Drive

New York (NC) — The U.S. Catholic Conference Communication Committee has approved 24 media projects for funding by the Catholic Communication Campaign in 1984.

The grants totaling \$1,426,953, announced Feb. 9 in New York, will fund a documentary on the life of Dorothy Day, a series on the U.S. bishops' nuclear arms pastoral, a pilot for a children's television series, two programs on parent-teen relationships, a video teleconference on Hispanic issues and training programs in Mexico and Chile.

Nine of the projects deal with television; four involve radio. The projects include youth ministry, special programming for Haitians, a radio program on apartheid in South Africa and training workshops for diocesan personnel involved in radio productions.

Last year the committee cited children's television as a priority and this year two major children's series have been awarded funds. One will be produced by the Christophers and the other is in production at the Pastoral Theological Institute in Madison, Conn.

Several additional projects from the 1983 funding cycle will be considered at the committee's June meeting. The committee has up to \$786,767 available for these additional projects, the announcement indicated.

The grants are made possible through the annual Catholic Communication Campaign collection in U.S. parishes.

The USCC also announced that Reveal, a new quarterly newsletter sponsored by the USCC Communication Committee, is being sent to the 19,000 Catholic parishes in the United States to inform pastors of the projects funded

by the CCC. Each issue of Reveal will feature a CCC-funded project specifically intended for use in parish ministry.

- Major projects funded by the CCC include:
- "Newsfront," formerly "World Report," a weekly newscast on religion produced by the National Catholic News Service, Washington, \$287,000.
  - "Real to Reel," a magazine-format religious insert for diocesan programming, UNDA-USA, Washington, \$184,000.

- "Nuestra Familia," a national Spanish-language TV series, HTN, San Antonio, Tex., \$130,000.

- "Don't Call Me A Saint: The Life and Legacy of Dorothy Day," a one-hour documentary film on Dorothy Day, Emmaus House, Inc., New York, \$105,000.

- Catholic Telecommunications -- North Carolina, to build a parish-based statewide telecommunication network, Dioceses of Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C., \$100,000.

- Christopher Kids, two pilots for a children's TV series blending entertainment with spiritual values, The Christophers, New York, \$75,000

- First experimental season of "Friends," 13 15-minute TV shows teaching basic religious concepts to 6- to 8-year-olds, The Pastoral Theological Institute, Madison, Conn., \$64,890.

- Other projects funded by CCC include:
- Instituto De Comunicaciones, for an institute for training clergy and laity, Mexico City, \$60,000.
  - Video Teleconference -- Hispanics and the Church, Chicago, \$50,000.

- Notre Dame d'Haiti Radio Network, programming for the Haitian community in Florida and the Caribbean, Miami, \$50,000.

- "How To Raise Parents in These Troubled Times," two 50-minute TV programs featuring Clayton Barbeau, Los Angeles, \$50,000.

Grants also were given to:

- Catholic Press Consultation Services, Catholic Press Association, \$48,000.

- The Call to Peace: Peacemakers, six 30-minute TV programs, The New Way, Inc., \$31,962.

- Phase III: National Vision for Church Communications, for national conference of church media agencies, USCC, \$31,897.

- Aid to Third World publications, NC News Service, \$21,000.

- "Father Harry -- God Squad" radio spots, \$20,000.

- UCAN Focus, a 24-page bi-weekly newsletter for missionaries, \$20,000.

- Broadcast training workshops, Paulist Communications, \$20,000.

- Models of Diocesan Communications, for study of models for diocesan communication structures, Marquette University, \$17,200.

- Journalism training, NC News Service, \$15,800.

- Cornerstone Media Inc., for marketing program, \$15,000.

- Social communications training for diocesan teams in Chile, \$11,190.

- Ybor City Film Project, 58-minute documentary on immigrant community, Lightfoot Films, Inc., \$10,000.

- The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena, radio dramas, New Radio and Performing Arts, New York, \$8,114.