

PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND 'IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST JOHN PAUL II'

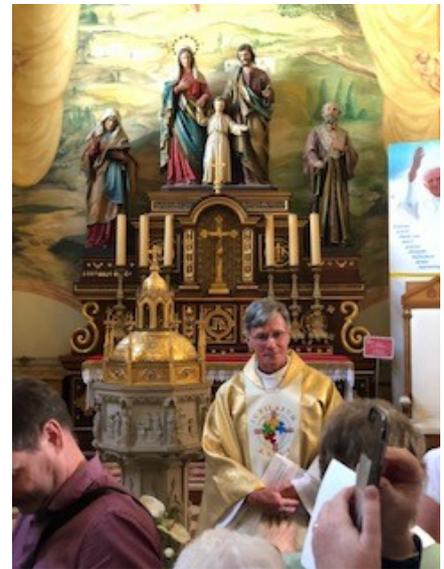
The two parishes of Sacred Heart Flitwick & Sacred Heart Leighton Buzzard joined together with parishioners from St Mary's Dunstable, St Francis Shefford & Turvey Abbey, on pilgrimage to Krakow, Poland 'In the Footsteps of St John Paul II'.



We left Heathrow on Monday afternoon, arriving in Krakow early evening, and were taken for dinner at Hawelka, which was one of the oldest restaurants in the Old Town Square. All lunches & dinners were included in this tour, arranged by Special Pilgrimages Ltd.

Our first day was a walking tour of Krakow: we visited Wavel Cathedral and saw the famous 'Pope's Window'. After lunch we celebrated Mass in St Florian's Church which was St John Paul II's first parish, and later in the afternoon visited the Jewish Quarter where Stephen Spielberg made the movie "Schindler's List". He needed an authentic Jewish quarter for the scenes depicting the Jewish ghetto of Podgorze in Krakow.

On Wednesday we left for a tour of Czestochowa to visit one of Poland's most important Pilgrimage destination, the 14th century Paulite Monastery of Jasna Gora, housing the icon of the 'Black Madonna', crowned in 1717 with Papal diadems. We celebrated Mass in the Rosary Chapel and had the afternoon to further explore the area. The paintings of Jerzego Dudy Gracza 'Golgotha of Jasna Gora' displayed in the Knights Hall were extremely thought provoking.



Thursday we visited Wadowice, the birthplace St John Paul II. The family home has been turned into the most innovative museum, showing his early birth years, youth and priesthood to Pope. We celebrated Mass in the Basilica and saw the font in which he was baptized. In the afternoon we set off for Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, visiting the Bernadine monastery, with a quick view of the famous Calvary paths along which over 40 churches, chapels, wayside shrines and bridges have been built, spread over 20km, imitating the layout of Jerusalem.

On our last day we celebrated our farewell Mass at the Old Convent Chapel in the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, followed by a short talk from a gentle Irish Nun, Sr Mary Clare. The majority of pilgrims opted to go on the excursion to Auschwitz; to say it was harrowing and upsetting would be an injustice to those who lost their lives in the most horrific and inhumane way. It was a sad end to the Pilgrimage but we can reflect on the many wonderful blessings we had on journey 'In the Footsteps of St John Paul II'.