

I first saw St John Paul II in Poland in 1987. It was one of the most emotional years of my life: the year of my conversion. I was a very lost person before I went to university in Krakow. My contact with Poland and with my fellow Poles changed me forever. I was an honorary Harcerka. I got to see him from pretty close up. Something happened when my eyes beheld him I began to cry so hard. I felt this crazy love flow straight from him to me. It was one of the most powerful experiences of my life. I knew I was loved totally and utterly. It was impossible how much this healed and freed and changed me.

Afterwards as my new life was continuing I heard about something called World Youth Day. I was sad because I also heard only 2 people from all of Toronto Archdiocese had officially gone to the last one. So we went to see him in Poland's WYD and we screamed and cried when he came like he was a rock star! We listened and his words were filled with the Holy Spirit and you wanted to just follow Jesus like he did. We decided we have to bring other young people. So we did. We went to Denver Manila Paris Rome and finally to Toronto. My husband went with our Polish youth while I prayed and stayed home with the children. I became WYD hermit here while he sweated it out there.

As I worked with the Youth we brought back I saw a change. Especially in regards to Chastity. The Theology of the Body exploded in our hearts and minds and in our youth. We knew why we wanted to fight to be chaste and to be faithful to God with not only our hearts and minds but also with our whole bodies. I saw different young people strong and fighting their own weaknesses. Teaching other young people why you had to fight. I saw beautiful marriages beginning and I saw seminarians who weren't afraid they loved the Eucharist Adoration prayer Confession and of course her the Virgin Mary. We all wanted to love God like St John Paul II did.

That was his greatest gift his own witness how to tell the truth yet love your enemy how to worship God with our bodies how to not be afraid and how to stay faithful. By bringing to Sainthood so many people he showed us the way. To this day I feel that immense love of God whenever I think about St Joh Paul II it is fresh and fully alive like the very first moment I felt it when I saw him on that stage all those years ago.

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