Chronology: Life and times of Pope John Paul II

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VATICAN CITY - Here is a short chronology of major events in the life and pontificate of Pope John Paul.

May 18, 1920 -- Born Karol Jozef Wojtyla, in Wadowice, Poland, second son of a retired Polish army sergeant and a mother of Lithuanian origin.

1942 -- After losing all members of his immediate family, he decides to become a priest and studies secretly for ordination during the Nazi occupation.

Nov 1, 1946 -- Ordained in Krakow, completes studies at pontifical universities in Rome and returns to Poland.

Sept 28, 1958 -- Consecrated assistant Bishop of Krakow.

Jan 13, 1964 -- Named Archbishop of Krakow.

June 26, 1967 -- Created a cardinal by Pope Paul VI.

Oct 16, 1978 -- Elected the first non-Italian Pope in 455 years. His pontificate begins officially six days later.

June 2-10, 1979 -- Returns to his communist-ruled homeland, a trip seen as a factor in the rise of the Solidarity movement.

May 13, 1981 -- Pope is shot by Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca in St Peter's Square. Surgery saves his life.

May 12, 1982 -- Rebel Spanish priest Juan Fernandez Krohn tries to stab the Pope in Fatima, Portugal. He is not hurt.

June 8-14, 1987 -- In his third visit to his homeland, the Pope strongly defends the banned Solidarity trade union.

June 25, 1987 -- The Pope receives Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, angering Jews who accused him of Nazi war crimes and plunging Catholic-Jewish relations to lowest point in 25 years.

Dec 1, 1989 -- Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev invites Pope to visit Soviet Union. The Pope steps up re-establishment of Church hierarchy throughout the East Bloc.

April 21, 1990 -- The Pope flies to Czechoslovakia to hail the collapse of communism with President Vaclav Havel.
Oct 18, 1990 -- At a Vatican synod, the Pope rules out a married priesthood.

July 15, 1992 -- Pope undergoes major surgery to remove an intestinal tumour the size of an orange.

Oct 31, 1992 -- After 359 years, Pope rehabilitates Galileo, condemned by the Church for saying Earth turns around the sun.

Nov 11, 1992 -- The Anglican Church's decision to allow women priests brings relations with the Vatican to a new low.

Dec 7, 1992 -- Pope issues the Roman Catholic Church's new universal Catechism -- the first in nearly five centuries.

Dec 28, 1993 -- The Vatican and Israel forge full diplomatic ties in the most important move towards ending nearly 2,000 years of distrust and hostility between Christians and Jews.

April 28, 1994 -- Pope slips in his bath and breaks right thigh bone.

Oct 17, 1994 -- Pope becomes best-selling author with publication of the book "Crossing the Threshold of Faith".

May 17, 1995 -- On the eve of his 75th birthday, the Pope rules out suggestions he should retire as other bishops do at age 75. Says he will remain in the job for as long as God wants.

Dec 25, 1995 -- Influenza forces the Pope to miss Christmas mass for the first time in his pontificate.

Sept 9, 1997 -- Pope's frailty keeps him from attending funeral of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Oct 31, 1997 -- In a major speech, the Pope says Christians failed during the Holocaust.

Jan 1, 2000 -- Pope opens Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica to usher in Christianity's third millennium.

March 13, 2000 -- The Pope asks pardon for the Church's past sins, including against Jews, heretics, women and minorities.

March 20-26, 2000 -- Pope makes trip to the Holy Land, visiting holy sites in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

May 8, 2001 - Pope ends visit to Syria, makes history by becoming the first Pope in history to enter a mosque.
Nov 22, 2001 - The Pope apologises to victims of sexual abuse by priests and other clergy.

August 2002 - Pope makes last poignant visit to his Polish homeland, visiting Krakow, and talking about death.

Oct 2002 - Pope marks 24th anniversary by issuing changes to the rosary, the most commonly known Catholic method of praying, for the first time in nine centuries.

January-March 2003 - The pope is at the forefront of an international church campaign to avert war in Iraq.

Oct 19, 2003 - Pope beatifies Mother Teresa before a crowd of 300,000, calling her an "icon" of charity.

Dec 18, 2004 - Pope John Paul condemns same sex marriage as an attack on the fabric of society.

Feb 1, 2005 - Pope taken to hospital in Rome with acute breathing problems and stays for 10 days, missing Ash Wednesday rituals at the Vatican for the first time in his papacy.

Feb 24, 2005 - A second bout of respiratory problems puts John Paul back in Rome's Gemelli hospital, where he undergoes a tracheotomy to ease his breathing but temporarily loses his voice.

March 1, 2005 - Pope John Paul starts speaking again.

March 13, 2005 - Pope John Paul speaks directly to the Roman Catholic faithful for the first time since throat surgery. He returns to Vatican later that day.

March 20, 2005 - For the first time in the papacy, Holy Week services leading up to Easter begin without the Pontiff.

March 24, 2005 - A cardinal who stood in for pontiff at a Holy Thursday ceremony at the Vatican says the ailing Pontiff was "serenely abandoning" himself to God's will.

March 27 - The Pope appears at the window of the Vatican following Easter services.

March 30, 2005: Vatican announces that the Pope is being fed through a nasal tube in an effort to boost his strength and help his slow recovery from throat surgery.

March 31, 2005: The Pope is suffering from a very high fever caused by a urinary infection, the Vatican says.

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