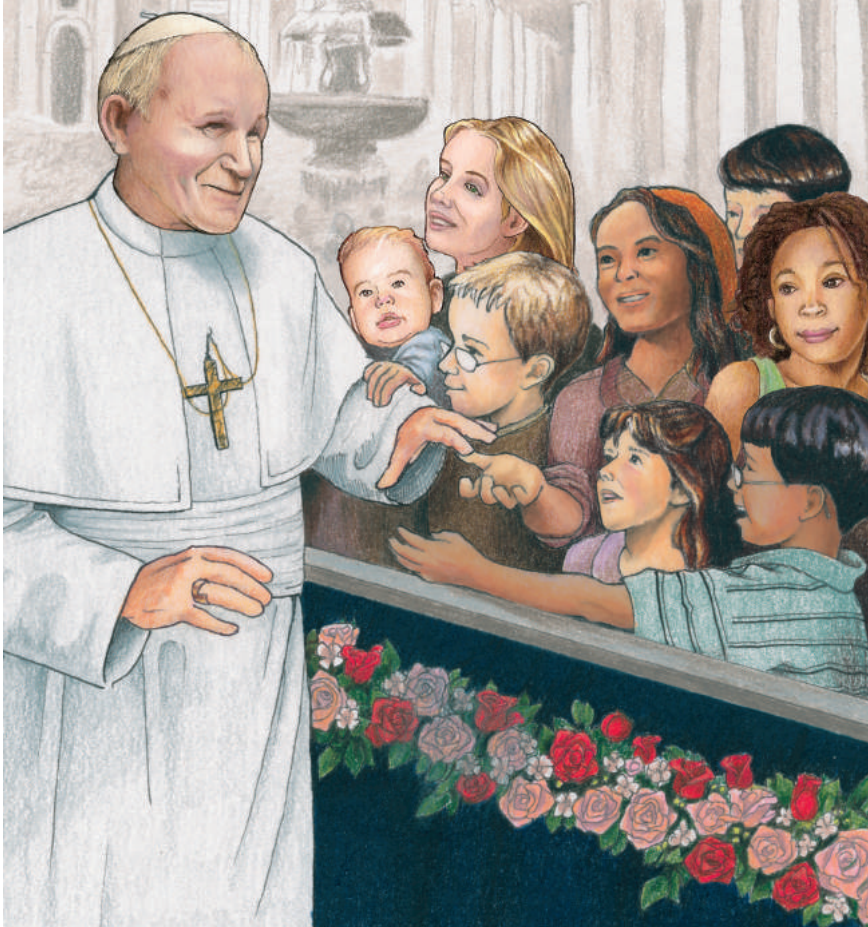


# Blessed John Paul II

## *Be Not Afraid*

by Susan Helen Wallace, FSP





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Written by Susan Helen Wallace, FSP

Illustrated by Charlie Craig

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## LOLEK

It had been a long winter in Wadowice (*Vad-o-VEE-chay*). Spring had been slow in coming, but now, as summer began, the trees were thick with green leaves. The warm weather brought new hope to the citizens of the little Polish town, located thirty miles southwest of Warsaw. Drawing aside a lace curtain, Mrs. Wojtyla (*Voy-TEE-wah*) smiled as she glanced out the window. *Summer is such a beautiful time of year, she thought, especially now that the war is over.* Her gaze returned to the cradle she was rocking. *And most especially since God has sent us little Karol!*

World War I, which raged from 1914 to 1918, had ended two years earlier. After 123 years of foreign occupation, Poland had finally regained its independence. Europe was at peace, at least for the moment. The young Wojtyla family—Emilia, her husband, Karol, and their son Edmund—were overjoyed at the birth of the newest family member on May 18, 1920. The infant boy was named Karol—the Polish equivalent of Charles—after his father.

It wasn't long though, before the chubby, rosy-cheeked baby was being called by the affectionate nickname Lolek (*LOW-leck*). (In English, Lolek would be similar to Charlie or Chuck.)

Emilia Wojtyla was a gentle, frail woman. Karol Wojtyla, Lolek's father, was a retired army officer. The couple were devoted to each other and to their children. Edmund was fourteen years older than Lolek. To his family and close friends, he was known as Mundek (*MOON-dek*), something like the nickname Eddie. Between the two boys, a girl had been born to Mr. and Mrs. Wojtyla. But she had lived only a short while.

Today, June 20, was special. Emilia carefully dressed her new baby in his long white baptismal robe. It was handmade of white linen and ruffles. Lolek looked perfect!

"He's ready to go, Papa," announced Emilia with a radiant smile. She wrapped her precious bundle in a light blanket to make sure he'd be warm enough. Mr. Wojtyla carried his infant son across the street to their parish, the Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There, Father Franciszek Zak, a military chaplain, baptized the little boy. Carefully pouring water over the baby's head, he pronounced the familiar words, "I baptize

you, Karol Jozef Wojtyla, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Little Karol Jozef was now a member of the family of God.

Emilia and her husband sat on the couch that evening watching their new baby sleeping in his cradle. The couple said little to each other as they enjoyed the peace of the moment. Mundek curled up beside them with an interesting book. Emilia's imagination was hard at work. *What mother doesn't think her son or daughter is destined for greatness?* she asked herself. *What will Lolek become? We're simple, hard-working people. But my husband has so many good qualities—diligence, honesty, and prayerfulness, to name a few. And Mundek is such a wonderful boy. Karol Jozef will learn much from the good example of his father and brother. Of course, I want to help by being a loving mother. I can see it all now,* she smiled. *As soon as it gets warmer, I'll push my Lolek up and down the streets in his stroller. And I'll tell the neighbors who stop to admire him, "My Lolek is going to be a great man some day. Just wait and see! Yes, just wait and see!"*