

## Fr. Jason's Wishful Thinking... Eastern Europe Travel Diary, Part 2

### Thursday, October 19th--Wadowice & Krakow Tour

As always, we started the day early by eating at the breakfast buffet. Most people ask me what the food is like when we go to Europe... well, a typical breakfast buffet normally has a cereal assortment, various cold cuts and sliced cheeses, scrambled eggs that are still a little runny, hot potato wedges, native sausages and meats, an assortment of sweet pastries, croissants and French bread, a yogurt bar, and juice and coffee machines. Now you are "in the know"!

Wadowice (pronounced "vide-a-veez-say") is located about one hour away from Krakow, Poland. It is the childhood home of Pope St. John Paul II (real name: Karol Wojtyla) and contains the three-room apartment where the Wojtyla family lived. On our way to Wadowice, Joseph told us that a bridge was under construction and we had to take a longer route... and let's just say that Julia (our tour manager) and Joseph (our driver) were fussing about the change of route. Julia was nervous because she wanted to keep us on schedule! We arrived close to our scheduled Mass time and I was rushed to complete Mass at the Church of the Presentation of Mary so we could be at our next appointment on time. This church is significant for several reasons: first of all, Pope John Paul II was baptized in the church, he was an altar server here, and he prayed before the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the front chapel while discerning a call to the priesthood. Finally, young Karol Wojtyla's father was a sacristan at Presentation Church.

Kirk & Karen Briggs requested a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary blessing that day, since they would celebrate the anniversary in a few weeks. I was asked to do the blessing in this church, so we squeezed it in after Mass. The group couldn't even visit JPII's baptismal font before we were whisked away to the museum for 11:00 am. The Vatican purchased the whole apartment complex several years ago, and painstakingly turned it into a first-class museum with timed ticket entry. Everyone enjoyed the museum and the exhibits, with rooms dedicated to: Karol Wojtyla's childhood and his connections to Jewish friends who were killed during World War II; his schooling, grades, poetry, and acting; his skiing trips and youth ministry; a tour of the original apartment; the story of his ascent to priest, then bishop, then cardinal; the day of his election as pope; the 1981 assassination attempt; his trips to Poland as pope and his connections to the Solidarity Movement; his encyclical letters; his pilgrimages to over 100 countries around the world; the ushering in of the third millennium; his death and funeral; and finally, a room focused on his sainthood... filled with letters, cards, and notes from people around the world. And like most Disney attractions, you found yourself in a gift shop! After the museum tour, we split up to discover Wadowice on our own. A small group of us went to Bistro Wado for pizza, and because of the time limit and our next appointment in Krakow, we had to get our "pope cake" to go. Pope cake is a layered pastry with vanilla pudding, a little spike of alcohol, and dusted with powdered sugar. It was young Karol Wojtyla's favorite dessert after school. Val and Crystal went on a search for real flowers in honor of Kirk & Karen's anniversary and they found red and pink roses. We left Wadowice and I was the laugh of the bus because as I ate my pope cake, the powdered sugar got all over my black shirt and pants and everyone thought it was funny. We arrived back in Krakow and freshened up at our hotel, and then we met Isabel who lead us on an in-depth tour of Krakow. We boarded the bus and Joseph brought us on a driving tour, while Isabel described the Vistula River, the Jewish quarter, the origin of the city (which includes the legend of a dragon and a slayer). We then got out of the bus at the base of Wawel Hill to tour the Royal Cathedral and the Castle. The cathedral is quite beautiful and contains the graves of St. Stanislaus and St. Hedwig. It also contains a relic of Pope St. John Paul II in a private chapel. After hearing a lot of information from Isabel about the castle, we left the hill and went down the street where John Paul II lived for a while as Archbishop of Krakow. We ended the tour in the central square and we had about one hour to shop, so the Heroman's and Dr. Perone & Dr. Golden and I headed to the chocolate shop, and I bought some chocolate that we could all share in the evening during nightcap. We ate at a local restaurant on the square, and a group of male history students from Great Britain were dining next to us. We had mushroom soup in a bread bowl, a chicken dish, and ice cream for dessert. Suddenly, a group of young musicians and dancers came out, and let's just say that the Englanders really