Pope John Paul I



Pope John Paul I, born Albino Luciani (1912-1978), was the shortest-reigning pope in modern times, serving only 33 days before his death in 1978, and is remembered for his humility, pastoral style, and unique papal choices.

Brief but historic papacy

Luciani was elected pope on August 26, 1978 and died on September 28, 1978, making his reign just 33 day—the shortest in modern papal history. His death led to the first year with 3 popes since 1605.

First pope with a double name

He chose the name John Paul to honor his two immediate predecessors: John XXIII, who made him bishop, and Paul VI, who made him patriarch of Venice and a cardinal. He was also the first pope in centuries to refuse a papal crown, wearing only the archbishop's pallium .

Italian heritage and first 20th-century pope

Born October 17, 1912 in Forno di Canale, Italy, Luciani was the most recent Italian-born pope and the first pope born in the 20th century. He came from a poor family, was ordained in 1935, and served in various diocesan roles before becoming cardinal in 1973.

Known as the "Smiling Pope"

Luciani was affectionately called the "Smiling Pope" for his warm, approachable public image. He was praised for his pastoral closeness to ordinary people, often speaking in simple, relatable terms, such as in his address to Italian children before school.

Humility and beatification

He openly admitted he had not yet "learned the job" of being a bishop. In 2022, Pope Francis beatified him as Blessed John Paul I, recognizing a miracle attributed to his intercession. His feast day is August 26.

Reflection Questions

Pope John Paul I was the first pope to refuse the Papal Crown. What significance did that "crown" have in the role of the Pope's leadership?

Pope John Paul is one step away from Sainthood, how many popes have been made saints? Among those of the 20th century, what have been their gifts to the Church?

Being the first Pope to choose "two names" - what is the significance of the Papal name one chooses, especially in modern times?