

After the Nazis began their occupation of Poland, during the second world war, they tolerated no descent from the Polish clergy.

Twelve priests from Karol Wojtyla's parish were arrested. Eight would die in Auschwitz, located about forty miles from Krakow.

At about this time, Karol—the future Pope John Paul II—met a tailor, Jan Tyranowski, who introduced him to St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross.

Joining Tyranowski's group, Karol engaged in yet another act of defiance against the Nazi regime. One of his jobs was to be a spiritual leader for a group of young men.

As the outside world descended further into darkness—while Hitler implemented his Final Solution against the Jews—Karol's inside world grew in spiritual faith. He later said:

*We were totally swallowed up in a great eruption of evil and only gradually did we begin to realize its true nature ... Polish culture is Christian, to its deepest roots. It cannot be torn away from its Christianity without being damaged.* (Quoted by Brendan Leahy in *Believe in Love: The Life, Ministry and Teachings of John Paul II*, at page 125.)

In the fall of 1942, Karol told his friends some very unexpected news. He was going to become a priest.

**See, also:**

[Witness to Evil - Young John Paul II, Part 1](#)

[Witness to Evil - Young John Paul II, Part 2](#)

[Witness to Evil - Young John Paul II, Part 3](#)

[Witness to Evil - Young John Paul II, Part 5](#)

[Witness to Evil - Young John Paul II, Part 6](#)

Credits:

Clip from "Young John Paul II - Witness to Evil," online courtesy BBC.

The BBC provides [background information](#) regarding this docudrama:

**Drama-documentary telling the story of five years which transformed the life of Karol Wojtyla and set him on the path to the Vatican.**

**The man who would become John Paul II was 19 when the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939. He had no intention of joining the church, but the devastating experience of Nazi occupation led him first to join the underground resistance and then to risk his life studying in secret to become a priest.**

**Interviews with key survivors from the period who knew him well, and the Pope's own writings, are combined in a powerful exploration of the young John Paul II's coming of age, including his brushes with death and the horrors he witnessed that helped to shape his thinking.**

"[Young John Paul II - Witness to Evil](#)" (2008)

**Director**

Philip Smith

**Producer**

Leanne Klein

**Writer**

Philip Smith

**Starring John Sackville**

as Karol Wojtyla

**Narrator**

Richard Lintern

Wall-to-Wall for the BBC. Originally broadcast, BBC One.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Witness-to-Evil-Young-John-Paul-II-Part-4>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Witness-to-Evil-Young-John-Paul-II-Part-4>