

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 734

Designating June 2, 2011, as Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage to Poland Day in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 24, 2011

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2011

WHEREAS, Pope John Paul II, born Karol Wojtyla on May 18, 1920, in Wadowice, Poland, was one of the most important figures of the twentieth century and a key protagonist in the fall of Soviet Communism; and

WHEREAS, Pope John Paul II lived under the evil ideologies of Nazism and Communism and risked his life for a priestly vocation in defense of his faith, his countrymen and country, and the dignity of the human person; and

WHEREAS, Pope John Paul II was a man of exceptional courage and character who used his abundant personal gifts in a lifetime of service to others as an actor, philosopher, theologian, linguist, priest, poet, mystic, and bishop; and

WHEREAS, as the head of the Roman Catholic Church for 26 years, Pope John Paul II was the first non-Italian Pope elected in 455 years, and he served from his election as Pope by the College of Cardinals on October 16, 1978, until his death on April 2, 2005; and

WHEREAS, his election as Pope in 1978 enabled him to focus the world's attention on the evils of Soviet Communism and the struggle of the Polish and other captive peoples for freedom; and

WHEREAS, in June 1979, just eight months after his election, Pope John Paul II returned to his homeland, Poland, for a nine-day pilgrimage that would change the world; and

WHEREAS, during his historic pilgrimage to Poland, almost one-third of the Polish people attended one of his many public masses or other meetings, and the rest of the population following his pilgrimage on television and radio heard his sermon in which he reiterated the worth and dignity of human beings and mankind's inalienable right to pursue the knowledge and love of God; and

WHEREAS, the people responded to his message of hope, love, and inspiration in affirmation in Warsaw's Victory Square with 14 minutes of applause and joyous singing in one accord of *Christus Vincit, Christus Regnat, Christus Imperat* (Christ Conquers, Christ Reigns, Christ Governs); and

WHEREAS, throughout his life Pope John Paul II reached out to people of all religions and walks of life to preach the inviolable dignity of the human person created in the image of God, which was reaffirmed most poignantly when he visited the Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz during his 1979 pilgrimage to Poland; and

WHEREAS, throughout his 26-year papacy, Pope John Paul II faithfully and unrelentingly proclaimed the principles of his faith; his prayers for and encouragement of the Polish people inspired them to remember and embrace their Christian heritage and rich history before Communism, and with his sense of humor, energy, youthfulness, and attentiveness to the needs and aspirations of people, he forged a bond with young people; and

WHEREAS, sixteen months after his historic nine-day pilgrimage to Poland, Solidarity was established, and the momentum generated by his visit helped to spark the transformation of Poland, ignite an epiphany, restructure the political landscape, encourage the Polish people to reclaim their country from the tyranny of Communism, and precipitate the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991; and

WHEREAS, Pope John Paul II was devoted to removing obstacles to religious freedom so that people of all faiths might live together in dignity and peace; and

WHEREAS, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of his pilgrimage to Poland in June 2009, a 30-foot cross, inscribed with the Pope's message and prayer for national renewal, was erected and dedicated in the same square in which Pope John Paul II celebrated the first Mass of his 1979 visit to Poland; and

WHEREAS, distinguished Cold War historian, Professor John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University, wrote in his 2005 book, *The Cold War: A New History*, that "[w]hen John Paul II kissed the ground at the Warsaw airport on June 2, 1979, he began the process by which Communism in Poland—and ultimately everywhere else in Europe—would come to an end"; and

WHEREAS, millions of people of all faiths now live in freedom because of Pope John Paul II's courageous witness to human dignity, Christian hope, and religious liberty, and it is fitting that his nine-day world-changing pilgrimage to Poland be remembered; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond is hosting in 2011 "A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People," an exhibition that highlights the late pontiff's history and commitment to the freedom of people of all religions; and

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WHEREAS, the exhibition, which Richmond is only the fourteenth city to host, was created to educate, commemorate, and inspire; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate June 2, 2011, as Pope John Paul II's Pilgrimage to Poland Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Virginia Holocaust Museum be commended on its hosting of the groundbreaking exhibition; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.