

Vox Populi

14 October 2026

Only four Popes have ever been known as “the Great”: Pope Leo I, Pope Gregory I, Pope Nicholas I and Pope John Paul II.

These are not official designations but rather popular acclaim. It’s remarkable for Pope John Paul II, this acclaim didn’t take time to build, but began immediately following his death.

In the eyes of millions, Pope John Paul II was great. He seemed to be loved by people across the board, providing a source of unity in a sometimes divided Church. He not only led the Church, but also the world. He was a force against dictatorships and communism’s ravage of Eastern Europe and particularly in his beloved Poland.

His final years were marked by illness and suffering. He did not view these as battles to run away from, but an opportunity to unite himself more greatly to the Cross.

Then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, presided over the Funeral Mass for Pope John Paul II and said the late-Pontiff’s life had been one dominated by listening to the words of the Risen Christ: “Follow me.”

“The love of Christ was the dominant force in the life of our beloved Holy Father,” Cardinal Ratzinger said.

“Anyone who ever saw him pray, who ever heard him preach, knows that. Thanks to his being profoundly rooted in Christ, he was able to bear a burden which transcends merely human abilities: that of being the shepherd of Christ’s flock, his universal Church.

“We can be sure that our beloved Pope is standing today at the window of the Father’s house, that he sees us and blesses us.”

His canonisation on 27 April 2014 was an acknowledgement of what many already believed: that the great Pope had seen the beatific vision and was now interceding for the Church on earth.

As we celebrate his feast day on 22 October, we ask for his intercession, and that just as his life on earth was “great”, so too would his prayers be for us.

Saint John Paul II, pray for us.