

## FAMOUS POLES



**John Paul II, Karol Wojtyła (1920-2005)** - Pope from 1978 to 2005. He studied Polish philology, later preparing for work in the church and was ordained in 1946. In 1946-48 he studied at the Papal University in Rome. He was a lecturer at the Theological Department of the Jagiellonian University and from 1956 a professor and head of department of the Ethics Faculty at the Catholic University in Lublin. In 1958 he became a bishop, five years later the archbishop of Cracow and in 1967 a cardinal. The pontificate of John Paul II was characterised by an openness to dialogue with the world and active spiritual work. He was the first in the history of the Church to hold prayer meetings with all religions. He opened up dialogue with the Jews. He was on more than 200 foreign trips, several times to Poland. Reform of canonical law, developing a new 'Catechism for the Roman Catholic Church' (1992), reorganisation of the Roman Catholic curia, countless encyclicals, canonisations and beautifications - these are the important achievements of the Catholic Church under the leadership of the Polish Pope. The important message of the pontificate of John Paul II were: respect for human rights and the right to work, struggle for peace, opposition to totalitarianism, and also new evangelism.



**Lech Wałęsa (born 1943)** - trade union activist, politician, Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1983. He holds honorary degrees from several universities, including Harvard, Columbia and Gdansk. In 1980 he headed the strike at the Gdansk Shipyards, and later became head of the Inter-factory Strike Committee. From 1980 to 1981 he was head of the Solidarity National Committee. He took part in negotiations with the communist authorities, the outcome of which was the agreement reached at the Round Table talks. In 1990 he was elected leader of the Solidarity trade union. Polish president 1990-95. He is the author of books including: 'The Path of Hope' (1987), and 'The Path of Freedom' (1991).



**Wisława Szymborska (born 1923)** - poet and literary critic. Awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1996, after other Poles Henryk Sienkiewicz, Władysław Reymont and Czesław Miłosz. In 2001 she became an honorary member of the American Academy of Fine Arts and Literature, the most important American distinction awarded to renowned artists. Her most important collections of verses are: 'Why We Live' (1952), 'Questions Asked of Oneself' (1993), 'Calling the Yeti' (1957), 'A Hundred Joys' (1967), 'People on the Bridge' (1986), 'Optional lectures' (1996), 'View of a Grain of Sand' (1996), 'Beginning and End' (1993) and 'A Hundred Verses, a Hundred Joys' (1997).



**Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004)** - poet, prose writer, essayist, translator. Nobel Prize-winner in 1980 and Polish Nike Prize-winner in 1998 for 'The little wayside dog'. Has been awarded many honorary degrees, including from Harvard University and the Jagiellonian University. After 1951 he has lived outside Poland. In the 1990s he returned permanently to Poland, to Cracow. He was professor at the Department of Slavic Literature and Languages at the University of California at Berkeley, later a professor at Harvard University. His most important collections of poetry are: 'Rescue' (1945), 'Daylight' (1953), 'A Treatise on Poetry,' (1957), 'The City Without a Name' (1969) and 'That' (2000). Author of wonderful essays, journalism and prose, for example 'The Captive Mind' (1953), 'Family Europe', 'The Land of Ulro' (1977), 'A history of Polish literature' (1969) and 'Second space'.



**Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)** - pianist and the greatest Polish composer. Born in Żelazowa Wola near Warsaw. Spent most of his life abroad, amongst other places, in France. He wrote his works especially for the piano, including concerts, sonatas, etudes, preludes, polonaises, mazurkas and waltzes. His works had an enormous influence on the music of the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries.



**Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543)** - renowned astronomer. He studied in Torun, Cracow and then in Bologna, Padova and Ferrara, where he earned a doctorate in canonical law. As the first in modern times he developed a heliocentric theory of the Solar System. He published his discoveries in the year of his death in the work 'On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres' (De revolutionibus orbium coelestium).



**Maria Skłodowska-Curie (1867-1934)**, renowned Polish physicist and chemist, who lived and worked in France. She was the first female professor at the Sorbonne. Together with her husband Pierre Curie she discovered polonium and radium in 1898. She was twice awarded the Nobel Prize: in 1903 in physics (jointly with her husband) for research in the area of natural radiation, and in 1911 in chemistry for extracting pure radium.