

# Vatican kicks off countdown to JP2 beatification

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(AP) -- The Vatican on Monday kicked off the countdown to Pope John Paul II's beatification by posting a YouTube video of his famous first papal speech, when the Polish-born pontiff asked the Roman crowd in St. Peter's Square to correct him if he made mistakes in Italian.

The clip was one of several from the early years of John Paul's pontificate posted on the Vatican's [YouTube](#) channel and linked to on its new Facebook page ahead of the May 1 beatification. Both were launched Monday after The Associated Press reported on the initiatives this weekend.

The first clip shows the-then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla entering the Vatican in his crimson cardinal robes for the 1978 conclave to elect a new pope. After white smoke snakes out from the Sistine Chapel's chimney, John Paul is seen emerging onto the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica as pope after it was announced "Habemus Papam!" - Latin for "We have a pope!"

A relative unknown going into the conclave - there hadn't been a non-Italian pope for 455 years - John Paul told the crowd that his fellow cardinals had elected a new pontiff from a "far-away country" that was nevertheless close in the faith.

After pausing for a moment, as if the enormity of his election had finally sunk in, John Paul continued with a comment that seemed to endear him to the crowd and beyond.

"Even though I cannot express myself in your - our language," he said in Italian to applause, "If I make mistakes, if I make mistakes you will correct me."

John Paul was one of the most beloved popes, a globe-trotting superstar who died in 2005 after a 27-year pontificate.

[Pope Benedict XVI](#) put John Paul on the fast-track for possible sainthood after shouts of "Santo Subito!" or "Sainthood Immediately!" erupted during his funeral Mass. In January, Benedict approved the miracle needed for the beatification and set the date for the ceremony.

The May 1 event, which could draw as many as 2 million pilgrims to Rome, is expected to be a major morale boost for a church still reeling from the clerical abuse scandal. The scandal has seriously tarnished John Paul's legacy since he presided over the church at a time when many of the crimes and coverups were committed.

**More information:** Vatican's Facebook page for John Paul beatification <http://on.fb.me/eJMIYp>

Vatican's YouTube channel for beatification  
<http://www.youtube.com/johnpaul2>

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