

# Catholic Throwback Thursday: The 1995 visit of Pope John Paul II to Baltimore

In honor of the papal canonizations of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II this upcoming Sunday, we are flashing back to 1995 when Blessed John Paul II visited Baltimore.

## **October 8, 1995:**

In a day never to be forgotten by Baltimore Catholics, the Holy Father finished his October 4-8 visit to our nation's East Coast with a 10-hour long stop in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Postponed from 1994 due to hip replacement surgery following a fall at the Vatican, this rescheduled whirlwind visit included Mass at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, leading a parade through the city, lunch with guests and representatives of Catholic Charities-run Our Daily Bread, a 40-minute meeting with officials from Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services, followed by an intimate, brief stop for prayer at the Baltimore Basilica, and a quick rest at the Archbishop's Residence. The day concluded with a prayer service at the Cathedral of Mary our Queen (for which the Holy Father was 60 minutes late), then meeting with the seminarians and faculty at St. Mary's Seminary, and a departure ceremony with speeches at BWI Airport.

## **Previous pre-papal visits:**

The first official papal visit to our Archdiocese, Pope John Paul II had actually stopped in Baltimore in August, 1976 when he was here for the 41st International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia as Cardinal Karol Wojtyla. Similarly, Pope Paul VI visited the Cathedral of Mary our Queen in 1960 when he was the Cardinal-Archbishop of Milan.

## **Before Mass at Oriole Park:**



The Holy Father greets over 60,000 persons who were lucky enough to get a ticket for this papal liturgy at Camden Yards.

*(CNS file photo by Nancy Wiechec)*

## **Honoring the birthplace of American Catholicism:**

In his homily, Pope John Paul II remembered the keys figures who shaped and formed our Church, including Archbishop John Carroll and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

*“The Psalmist’s call to hear the Lord’s voice has particular significance for us as we celebrate this Mass in Baltimore. Maryland was the birthplace of the Church in colonial America. More than three hundred and sixty years ago, a small band of Catholics came to the New World to build a home where they could “sing joyfully to the Lord” (Ps 95:1) in freedom. They established a colony whose hallmark was religious tolerance, which would later become one of the cultural cornerstones of American democracy. Baltimore is the senior Metropolitan See in the United States. Its first Bishop, John Carroll, stands out as a model who can still inspire the Church in America today. Here were held the great Provincial and Plenary Councils which guided the Church’s expansion as waves of immigrants came to these shores in search of a better life. Here in Baltimore, in 1884, the Bishops of the United States authorized the “Baltimore Catechism”, which formed the faith of tens of millions of Catholics for decades. In Baltimore, the country’s Catholic school system began under the leadership of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. The first Seminary in the United States was established here, under the protection of the Virgin Mother of God, as was America’s first Catholic College for women. Since those heroic beginnings, men and women of every race and social class have built the Catholic community we see in America today, a great spiritual movement of witness, of apostolate, of good works, of Catholic institutions and organizations.”*



Father Doug Kenney of St. Margaret Church in Bel Air recalls with great joy that special day when he greeted the Holy Father before Mass began. To the right is Msgr. James Barker, pastor of St. Ignatius Church, Hickory.

*(Photo: Father C. Douglas Kenney)*



After the Holy Father's popemobile led a three-quarter mile parade route from the stadium through the city, Cardinal Keeler introduced the Holy Father to the 17 invited guests and staff members of Our Daily Bread. It was noted by one of those guests that Pope John Paul II ate every bite of the creamed chicken casserole, vegetables, and dinner roll that is a favorite of the hot meals served there each day.

*(Photo: Archdiocese of Baltimore)*



America's first cathedral: The Holy Father prayed briefly at the Basilica of the Assumption.

*(Photo: Chiaki Kawajiri/Baltimore Sun): This is my favorite photo from the visit. You can order a copy of this poignant photo here.*



Pope John Paul II, seen with Cardinal Keeler and Basilica Rector Msgr. James V. Hobbs, greets those gathered outside the Basilica.

*(Photo: Baltimore Basilica)*



Pope John Paul II thanked local security from Baltimore City Police Department and the Maryland State Police before leaving St. Mary's Seminary by helicopter for his departure for Rome from BWI Airport: Officer Milton Krysztofiak prepares to kiss the Holy Father's ring as Maryland State Police Major Johnny Hughes looks on.

*(Photo: Baltimore City Police Dept.)*

### **More papal visit resources:**

An outline of the events of the pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II and links to his speeches and homilies can be found [here](#).

## **Visit the Pope John Paul II exhibit now at the Baltimore Basilica:**

A free exhibit with photographs, videos, and papal momentos are on display in the museum room at the Basilica of the Assumption during regular visitor hours.

### **Not-to-be missed videos:**

Relive the day with an hour of highlights from the historic 1995 visit from the Archdiocese of Baltimore:

Narrated by Baltimore broadcaster Jim McKay of ABC's "Wide World of Sports" fame, this hour-long video takes you behind the scenes of all aspects of this historic visit.

### **Also view:**

- 1. A video montage of the papal visit by WBAL News: 4 minutes.**
- 2. The farewell address at BWI Airport on video.**