

## 1982: Pope makes historic visit to Canterbury

Pope John Paul II has visited Canterbury Cathedral - the first pontiff ever to do so.

The Pope was greeted by the Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie and a crowd of wellwishers who cheered as he arrived by helicopter.

The narrow streets of the ancient city were lined with up to 25,000 people.

They included people from the Pope's native Poland, who waved their flags along the route.

“ How happy I am to be able to speak to you today in this great cathedral ”  
Pope John Paul II

The pontiff told the congregation of his happiness at visiting the cathedral, adding that it was a day "which centuries and generations have awaited".

There was controversy ahead of the Pope's visit as it became clear he would not use the ceremonial entrance - the Great West door - at the front of the cathedral.

His bodyguard, Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, had earlier said the pontiff would use the back door because of "security and tiredness".

John Paul II walked slowly with Dr Runcie to the deanery for a meeting with the Prince of Wales.



Pope John Paul II is the first pontiff to visit Canterbury Cathedral

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### In Context

The Pope's visit to Canterbury Cathedral was part of a hectic six-day trip to Britain - the first ever made by a pontiff.

John Paul's itinerary was drafted 42 times before the Vatican finally approved it.

It took the pontiff to London, Canterbury, Coventry, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow

The meeting with the Prince of Wales was followed by a ceremony which involved the Pope, Dr Runcie and Methodist minister the Rev Dr Kenneth Greet renewing their baptismal vows together.

The church leaders then greeted all the cardinals and bishops with a "kiss of peace" before lighting candles for Christian martyrs of different faiths.

The Pope and Dr Runcie knelt in silent prayer at the spot where St Thomas-à-Becket was murdered in 1170.

The Pope and Archbishop issued a common declaration, which thanked God for "the progress that has been made in the work of reconciliation" between them.

Later in the afternoon, he received a massive ovation from 80,000 people at a mass at Wembley Stadium, billed as the first of his great "outdoor spectaculars".

The crowd sang "He's got the whole world in his hands" and clapped their hands as the Pope passed by in his "Popemobile".

Uniformed police surrounded a specially built main altar in the stadium as the Pope said "peace be with you" and began the mass in front of the huge crowd and 2,500 priests.

and Cardiff.

Other highlights of the tour included a mass at Westminster Cathedral and a meeting with the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

There were concerns about the Pope's health after he was severely injured in an assassination attempt in May 1981. He survived after major surgery.

After years of ill health the Pope died at 2137 (1937 GMT) on Saturday 2 April 2005 after he failed to recover from a throat operation.

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