

MALTZ MUSEUM HOSTS EXHIBITION ON POPE JOHN PAUL II *Highlights Pope's Special Friendship with the Jewish People*

Cleveland, OH (April 17, 2012) – Opening May 18, 2012 at the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, *A Blessing to One Another: Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People* is an interactive experience that allows visitors to follow in John Paul II's footsteps from his childhood to his role as head of the world's largest church. The Museum hopes the exhibition will inspire visitors to live out the pope's request for interfaith understanding.

Pope John Paul II travelled extensively and met with believers from many divergent faiths. During his pontificate, he greatly improved Catholic and Jewish relations. In 1979, he became the first pope to visit the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, where many of his countrymen had perished during World War II. When he visited the Great Synagogue of Rome in 1986, he became the first pope to have made an official papal visit to a synagogue. His most historic moment came in 2000 when, after visiting the national Holocaust memorial in Israel, he touched the Western Wall in Jerusalem, placing a letter inside it in which he prayed for forgiveness for the actions against Jews. (Prayer available on request)

The 1,500 square-foot exhibition takes its name from the pope's commemoration in 1993 of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The exhibition will feature photos, personal artifacts and videos documenting the pope's history with the Jewish people.

Visitors will have the opportunity to walk through rooms representing various stages of the pope's life, including one from his childhood. There will also be an interactive area where visitors can write prayers that will be taken to the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

The exhibition's photographs and artifacts are on loan from museums in the United States, Poland, Italy, and Israel. Some of the works include:

- Reproductions of the Pope's baptismal certificate and high school and college transcripts, on loan from the City of Wadowice Museum.
- An official license plate, bearing the swastika symbol, from one of five Nazi-owned vehicles used in Wadowice, on loan from the City of Wadowice Museum.
- Shoes worn by Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz and a can used for Zyklon-B, the chemical used by Nazis to kill Jews in gas chambers. These items have been loaned by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland.
- The biretta (red scull cap) the future pope received when named a Cardinal in 1967 and vestments he wore at an inter-religious prayer service in Assisi, loaned by the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, DC.



MALTZ MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE

A Blessing to One Another will be on display through Sunday, August 5, 2012.

Created and Produced by Xavier University, Hillel Jewish Student Center, The Shtetl Foundation.

Presented by Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, The Samuel H. & Maria Miller Foundation, and PNC Bank.

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Visit www.MaltzMuseum.org or call 216.593.0575 for more information.