

Press Contact:
Donna Williams, WNET
212-560-8030; Williamsd@wnet.org

**THIRTEEN's *The Secrets of Saint John Paul*
Reveals an Intimate Side of the Revered Pontiff
Tuesday, April 5, at 9 p.m. on PBS**

Pope John Paul II, born Karol Józef Wojtyła, was ordained in 1946, and in 1978 became the first Polish Pope and first non-Italian Pope in more than 400 years. He served as Pope until his passing in 2005. Beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011, he was canonized by Pope Francis in 2014. While much has been written about him, a recent discovery of his personal correspondence reveals a relationship that, until now, has remained largely hidden.

In 2014, BBC broadcaster Edward Stourton was ushered into a room in one of Europe's most celebrated libraries. Watched over by its Director, he was shown a pile of papers so sensitive that only a handful of staff knew of their existence: the intimate letters of Pope John Paul II (written before and during his Papacy) to a married Polish-American philosopher, the late Dr. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. It was a relationship the Vatican has kept secret for decades.

The full story surrounding these letters will be made public for the first time when THIRTEEN presents *The Secrets of Saint John Paul*, premiering nationally Tuesday, April 5 from 9 -10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), opening an unprecedented window into the inner life of a man in the act of making history. On February 15, an abbreviated version of the film was broadcast on the BBC's flagship current affairs show *Panorama*, where it made international headlines.

The letters are filled with emotion as they meditate on the nature of human relationships. They reflect Pope John Paul II's struggle against Communism in his native Poland, and his shaping of Catholicism into the spiritual wellspring of an

opposition movement that would – as he had always believed - bring about a revolution and sweep away the Soviet Empire.

Dr. Tymieniecka was not an unknown figure in John Paul's life. From researching his biography on Pope John Paul II, journalist Carl Bernstein, for one, knew that she had collaborated with Karol Wojtyła, on the English translation of one of his books *The Acting Person*, published in 1979. But what Edward Stourton discovered was the remarkably close friendship the future Pope shared with Dr. Tymieniecka, one that spanned more than 30 years.

In 2014, Dr. Tymieniecka died and, according to the documentary, that decades-long friendship might have remained buried with her, if not for a call she made in 2008 to a New York based expert in rare manuscripts, Marsha Malinowski, president of Fine Books & Manuscripts, to come to New Hampshire and look at what amounted to 343 letters John Paul had written to her.

Malinowski negotiated a private sale to the National Polish Library where the letters were stored in the archive for seven years. Stourton located the letters in Warsaw and, after much negotiating, was allowed to see and actually film the letters.

Excerpts from these letters disclose a deep and profound friendship between intellectual partners, who relished discussing philosophical issues. The letters also speak of John Paul's visit with Dr. Tymieniecka and her husband at their vacation home in Vermont, of his gift to her of a precious scapular, and more.

To put the letters and the friendship in context, Stourton interviews not only Bernstein, who once interviewed Dr. Tymieniecka; but also John Cornwell, seminarian 1953-1958; Eamon Duffy, emeritus professor, history of Christianity, Cambridge; Dr. Eugene J. Kisluk, historian and manuscript expert; Dr. Mark Lasota, historian of Polish secret police; and close friends of Dr. Tymieniecka and executors of her estate Professors Jadviga A. Smith and William A. Smith; among others.

Just how revelatory is ***The Secrets of Saint John Paul?*** Though there is no suggestion in the letters or in the documentary of any impropriety between Pope John Paul II and Dr. Tymieniecka, what we learn from his letters sheds informative light on both his intellect and his humanity.

The Secrets of Saint John Paul is a production of Blakeway Productions Ltd. and THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET in association with BBC and ARTE France. Writer is Edward Stourton. Director/Producer is Richard Denton. Executive Producer for Blakeway is Fiona Stourton. Executive in Charge for WNET is Stephen Segaller. Executive Producer for THIRTEEN is Steve Burns. Coordinating Producer for THIRTEEN is Stephanie Carter.

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