

DAY 2 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2026 | ARRIVAL IN WARSAW

St. Matthew and St. Faustina: Called in Ordinary Life

GRACE TO ASK

To hear Christ address us personally and to answer without waiting to become impressive.

Morning Prayer with the Church

Morning Prayer for the Feast of Saint Matthew. Use the Proper of Saints and Common of Apostles, Liturgy of the Hours, Volume IV.

Additional pilgrimage intercessions

- For those whom Christ is calling from compromised, complicated, or unfinished lives.
- For safe arrival and gracious welcome among strangers.

After the Liturgy of the Hour

Christ the Physician, look upon us as you looked upon Matthew. Call us out of every arrangement that makes us smaller than your mercy, and teach us to welcome the people whose respectable religion keeps at a distance. Amen.

BEFORE WE STEP OFF

Our first church in Poland is not a monument selected for grandeur. It is the parish where a nineteen-year-old woman, uncertain and poor, placed her future before God. I want us to enter St. James slowly. Vocation usually begins without applause: in the silence of a pew, a family conversation, a troubling desire, or the counsel of one faithful priest. Ask not only what happened to Helena Kawolska (St. Faustina) here. Ask what Christ is saying to you now...





Warsaw's rebuilt historic center: beauty carried through destruction and return. [Photo credit](#)

MUSIC PLAYLIST

BEAUTIFUL CITY

Music & Lyrics by: Stephen Schwartz

From the Broadway Musical: Godspell

Scan me!



The place we are entering

Warsaw teaches us very quickly that first impressions are rarely enough. At first glance, it is a modern European capital: glass towers, traffic, government buildings, concert halls, broad avenues, reconstructed churches, and neighborhoods full of ordinary life. But Warsaw must be read more slowly.

Much of what looks ancient is, in fact, rebuilt.

After the devastation of the Second World War, the Polish people chose to reconstruct a city that had been deliberately destroyed. Streets, churches, squares, and façades rose again from rubble. And so the beauty of Warsaw carries a particular kind of grace. It is not simply the beauty of what survived. It is the beauty of what people loved enough to restore.

There is something deeply Christian in that. We believe in a God who does not discard what has been wounded. He rebuilds. He restores. He gathers what has been scattered. He does not always return us to what we were before, but he can make something beautiful and faithful even after the ruins.

Into an earlier Warsaw came a young woman named Helena Kowalska. It was July 1924. She had left home because the desire to give herself to God would not leave her in peace. And yet the path was hardly clear. She had little formal education, little money, and no certainty that a religious community would receive her. Convent doors did not simply open because she had a vocation.

So she did something wonderfully simple. She went into a church and prayed. At St. James Church in Ochota, still unfinished at the time, Helena sought direction and received practical help from Father Jakub Dąbrowski. There was nothing spectacular about the moment. No one standing there could have known that this young woman would one day be known throughout the world as Saint Faustina, or that the message of Divine Mercy entrusted to her would touch millions of lives.



At that moment, she simply had to take the next faithful step. That may be one of the great lessons of our own faith pilgrimage: God rarely gives us the entire road at once. He gives us enough light for the next step.

The Feast of Saint Matthew gives us the Gospel language for understanding this. Jesus finds Matthew at the customs post, in the middle of his ordinary and compromised life, and says simply, “Follow me.” Jesus does not wait until Matthew has repaired his past. He calls him to a future with Him. That is mercy.

Mercy does not tell us that sin does not matter. Mercy tells us that our failures do not have to have the final word. Grace meets us where we are, and begins to create something new before we could ever claim to deserve it.

Helena would discover the same thing. Her vocation would require courage, work, obedience, patience, disappointment, discernment, and the help of other people. Grace did not remove the human process; grace entered it.

And perhaps that is important for us to remember as we begin our days together in Poland. God may be speaking through a church, a painting, the journey, a saint, a history, or a moment of prayer. But he may also speak through the person sitting beside you.

So when we gather for our welcome dinner tonight, let the Gospel begin there. Sit with someone you do not know well. Ask a question and really listen to the answer. Learn something about another pilgrim's life. Resist the temptation to remain only with the familiar faces.

Travel can make us protective of our comfort, our space, and our own little circle. Pilgrimage asks us to become more spacious. Perhaps our first work of mercy in Poland will be something very small: giving another person our attention.

Warsaw was rebuilt because people refused to believe that destruction had the last word. Saint Faustina became who God was calling her to be because she trusted the next faithful step. And perhaps that is enough for us today as well. We do not need to know everything God will do on this pilgrimage. We simply need to be present enough, generous enough, and trusting enough to take the next step with him.

How we enter as pilgrims

- At St. James, take a moment to sit, be still, and pray; receive this church as a place of decision.
- Pray for a young person discerning priesthood, religious life, marriage, or service.
- At dinner, make room for a story you have not heard before.

Polish for the day: Dzień dobry — good day.

Today's movement

- OS 663: Vienna to Warsaw, arriving 2:15 p.m.
- Airport greeting and group transfer.
- 5:00 p.m. Mass at St. James Church.
- Check in at Polonia Palace Hotel; 7:30 p.m. included welcome dinner.

CATHOLIC DAILY MASS

FEAST OF SAINT MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

5:00 p.m. • Church of St. James • Warsaw

Schedule marker only • Use the separate worship aid for Mass

Evening Prayer with the Church

Evening Prayer for the Feast of Saint Matthew. Use the Proper of Saints and Common of Apostles.

Additional pilgrimage intercessions

- For the Church in Poland and every parish that quietly helps a vocation take its next step.
- For those who feel unworthy to sit at Christ's table.

After the Liturgy of the Hour

Merciful Jesus, thank you for bringing us safely to Poland. As you entered Matthew's house, enter the rooms we guard from you. Let this first evening become a table of gratitude and a school of welcome. Amen.

Evening examen and pilgrim notes

Where is Christ asking me to rise and follow?

Whom do I still consider an unlikely guest at the Lord's table?
