

*The following poems by Karol Wojtyla  
were written while he was a parish priest  
and auxiliary bishop of Krakow.*

*They first appeared in various Polish religious and  
philosophical journals under the pseudonym  
"Andrzej Jawien."*

*Many years later they were collected and published in*

**THE PLACE WITHIN - THE POETRY  
OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**

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**I**

## *Over This, Your White Grave*

*Over this, your white grave  
the flowers of life in white--  
so many years without you--  
how many have passed out of sight?*

*Over this your white grave  
covered for years, there is a stir  
in the air, something uplifting  
and, like death, beyond comprehension.*

*Over this your white grave  
oh, mother, can such loving cease?  
for all his filial adoration*

*a prayer:*

*Give her eternal peace--  
[Krakow, spring 1939]*

## *John Beseeches Her*

*Don't lower the wave of my heart,  
it swells to your eyes, mother;  
don't alter love, but bring the wave to me  
in your translucent hands.*

*He asked for this.*

*I am John the fisherman. There isn't much  
in me to love.*

*I feel I am still on that lake shore,  
gravel crunching under my feet--  
and, suddenly--Him.*

*You will embrace his mystery in me no more,  
yet quietly I spread round your thoughts like myrtle.*

*And calling you Mother--His wish--*

*I beseech you: may this word  
never grow less for you.*

*True, it's not easy to measure the meaning  
of the words he breathed into us both  
so that all earlier love in those words  
should be concealed.*

# Material 1

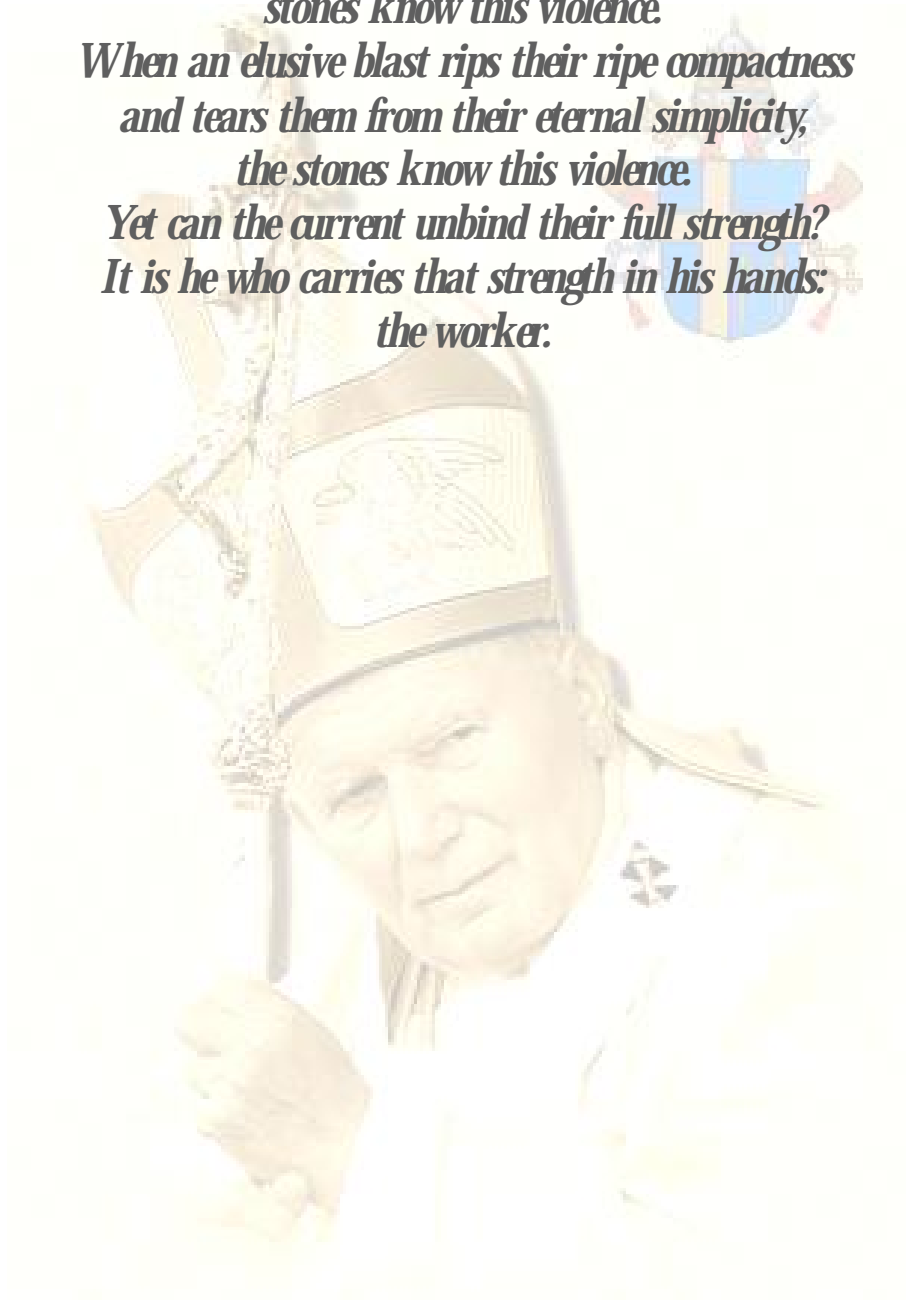
*Listen: the even knocking of hammers,  
so much their own,  
I project on to the people  
to test the strength of each blow.  
Listen now: electric current  
cuts through a river of rock.  
And a thought grows in me day after day:  
the greatness of work is inside man.  
Hard and cracked  
his hand is differently charged  
by the hammer  
and thought differently unravels in stone  
as human energy splits from the strength of stone  
cutting the bloodstream, an artery  
in the right place.  
Look, how love feeds  
on this well-grounded anger  
which flows in to people's breath  
as a river bent by the wind,  
and which is never spoken, but just breaks high vocal cords.  
Passers-by scuttle off into doorways,  
someone whispers: "Yet here is a great force."  
Fear not. Man's daily deeds have a wide span,  
a strait riverbed can't imprison them long  
Fear not. For centuries they all stand in Him,  
and you look at Him now  
through the even knocking of hammers.*

## *Material 2*

*Bound are the blocks of stone, the low-voltage wire  
cuts deep in their flesh, an invisible whip--  
stones know this violence.*

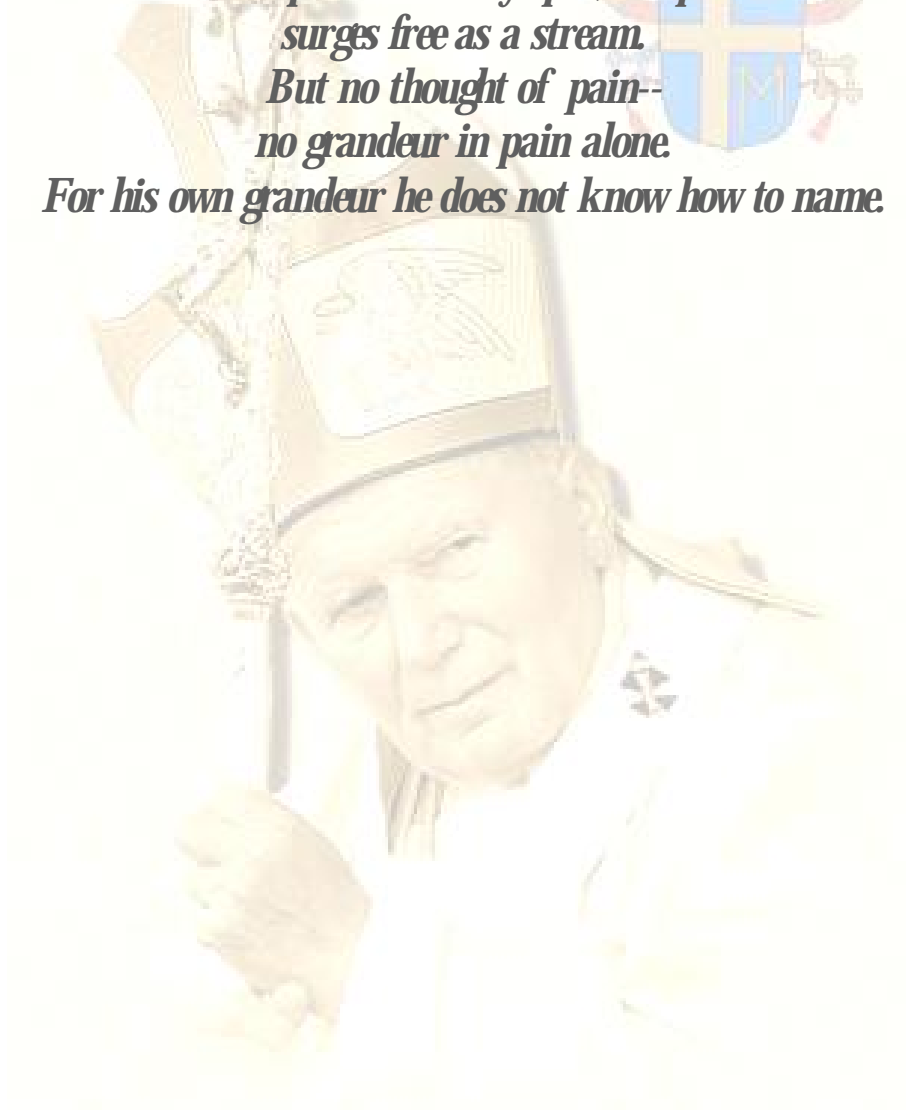
*When an elusive blast rips their ripe compactness  
and tears them from their eternal simplicity,  
the stones know this violence.*

*Yet can the current unbind their full strength?  
It is he who carries that strength in his hands:  
the worker.*



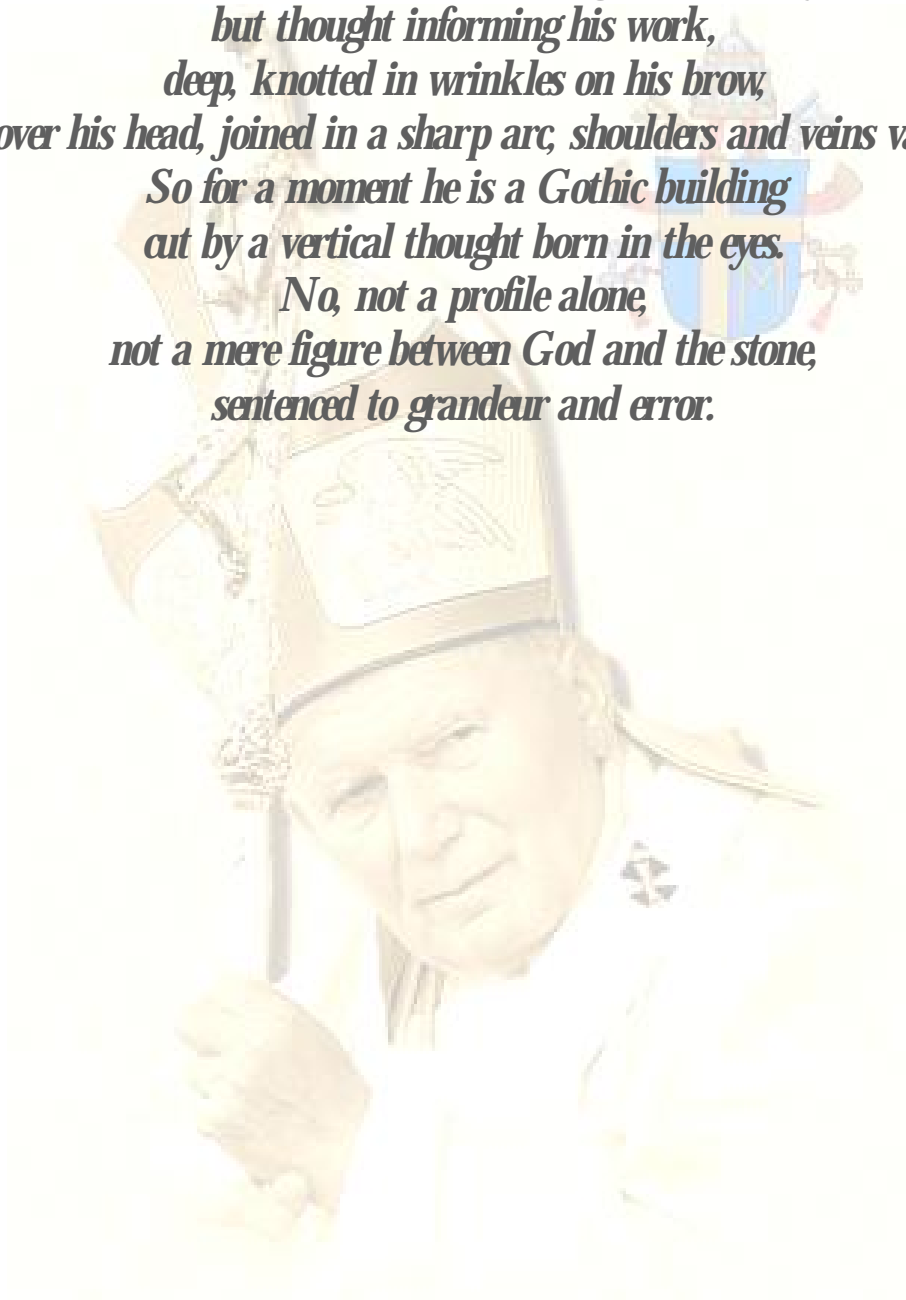
## *Material 3*

*Hands are the heart's landscape. They split sometimes  
like ravines into which an undefined force rolls.  
The very same hands which man only opens  
when his palms have had their fill of toil.  
Now he sees: because of him alone others can walk in peace.  
Hands are a landscape. When they split, the pain of their sores  
surges free as a stream.  
But no thought of pain--  
no grandeur in pain alone.  
For his own grandeur he does not know how to name.*



## Material 4

*No, not just hands drooping with the hammer's weight,  
not the taut torso, muscles shaping their own style,  
but thought informing his work,  
deep, knotted in wrinkles on his brow,  
and over his head, joined in a sharp arc, shoulders and veins vaulted.  
So for a moment he is a Gothic building  
cut by a vertical thought born in the eyes.  
No, not a profile alone,  
not a mere figure between God and the stone,  
sentenced to grandeur and error.*

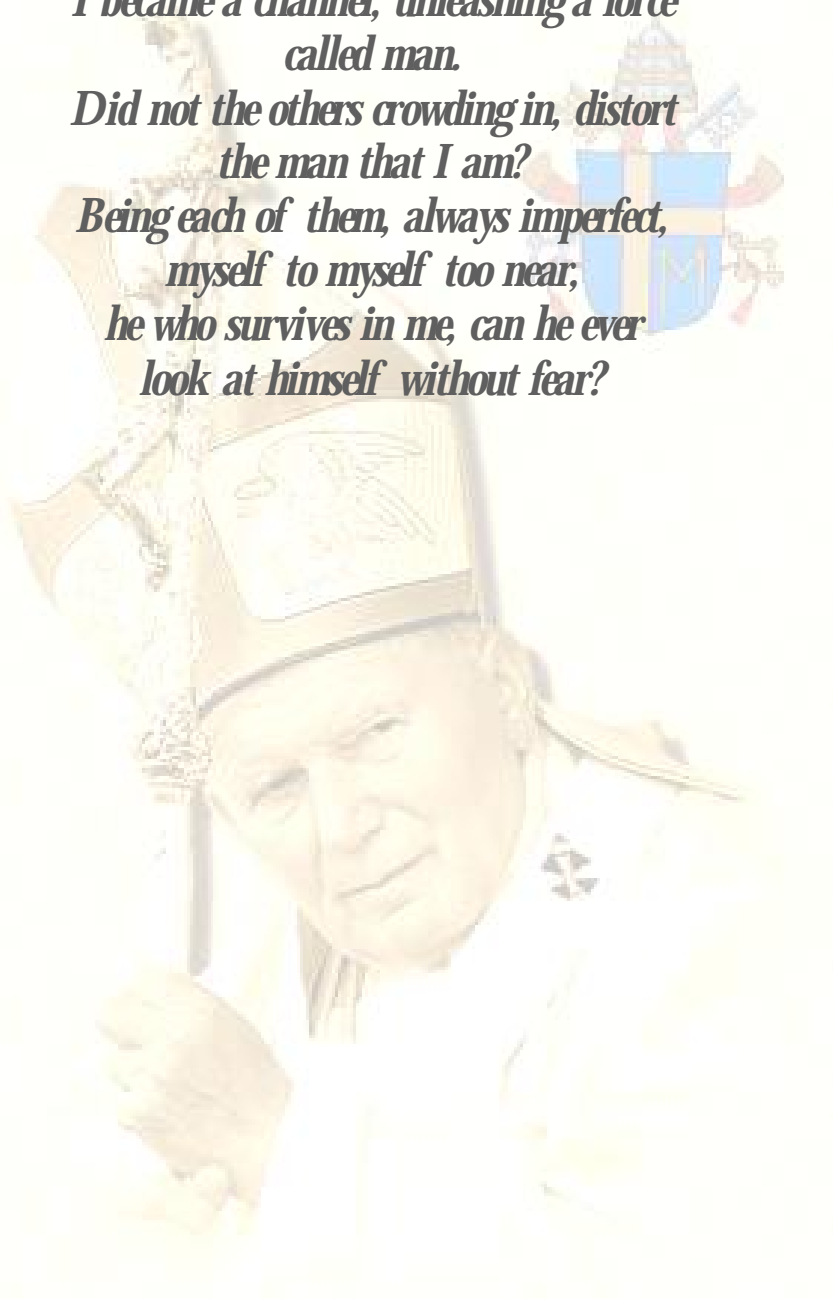


# Actor

*So many grew round me, through me,  
from my self, as it were.  
I became a channel, unleashing a force  
called man.*

*Did not the others crowding in, distort  
the man that I am?*

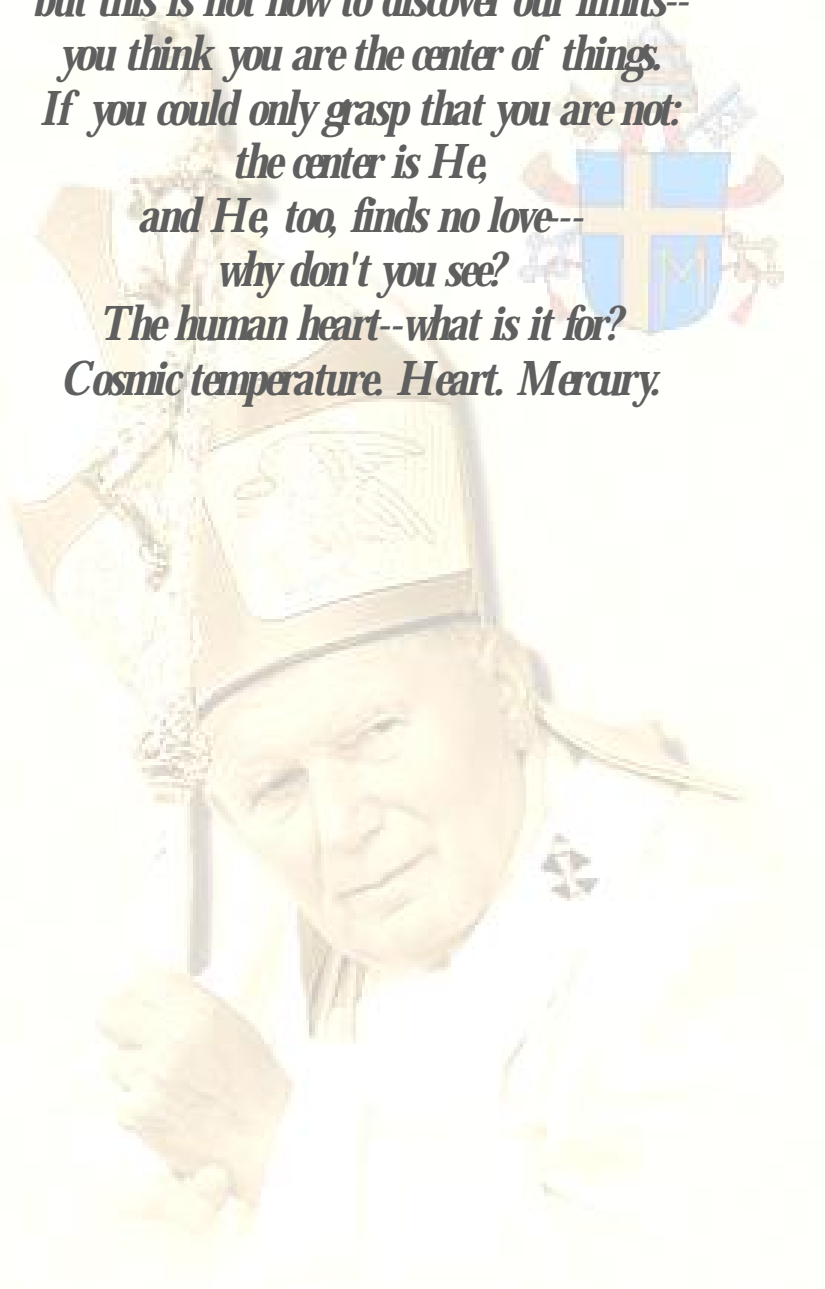
*Being each of them, always imperfect,  
myself to myself too near,  
he who survives in me, can he ever  
look at himself without fear?*





## *Girl Disappointed in Love*

*With mercury we measure pain  
as we measure the heat of bodies and air;  
but this is not how to discover our limits--  
you think you are the center of things.  
If you could only grasp that you are not:  
the center is He,  
and He, too, finds no love--  
why don't you see?  
The human heart--what is it for?  
Cosmic temperature. Heart. Mercury.*



# *The Quarry*

*He wasn't alone*

*His muscles grew into the flesh of the crowd, energy their pulse,  
As long as they held a hammer; as long as his feet felt the ground.  
And a stone smashed his temples and cut through his heart's chamber:*

*They took his body and walked in a silent line  
Toil still lingered about him, a sense of wrong  
They wore gray blouses, boots ankle-deep in mud.*

*In this, they showed the end.*

*How violently his time halted: the pointers on the low voltage dials jerked, then  
dropped to zero again.*

*White stone now within him, eating into his being, taking over enough of him to  
turn him into stone.*

*Who will lift up that stone, unfurl his thoughts again under the cracked temples?  
So plaster cracks on the wall.*

*They laid him down, his back on a sheet of gravel.*

*His wife came, worn out with worry; his son returned from school*

*Should his anger now flow into the anger of others?*

*It was maturing in him through his own truth and love*

*Should he be used by those who came after; deprived of substance, unique and  
deeply his own?*

*The stones on the move again; a wagon bruising the flowers.*

*Again the electric current cuts deep into the walls.*

*But the man has taken with him the world's inner structure, where the greater  
the anger; the higher the explosion of love.*