

Modern Pope John Paul Used Ancient Ritual of Self-Flagellation

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New Book on Pope on Sale Today Reveals He Had Sweet Tooth and a Temper

Pope John Paul II, whose world travels helped modernize the papacy, sometimes practiced ancient rituals of self-flagellation, including [hitting himself](#) with a belt that he kept in his closet, according to a new book.

The Polish pope would also sleep at times on the hard floor of his Vatican palace and muss up the bed to avoid drawing attention to his ascetic efforts at piety. The practice is intended to remind people of the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

Such rituals, reminiscent of scenes right out of "The DaVinci Code," although practiced by very few Catholics, were revealed in a new book about the late pontiff entitled "Why He's a Saint," written by Monsignor Slawomir Oder. Oder is John Paul's postulator, or the Vatican's main researcher and advocate for having him canonized a saint.

The pope died in 2005 and his successor, [Pope Benedict XVI](#), has fast-tracked a proposal for his sainthood. Oder has researched his life, collected boxes of documents and interviewed more than 100 people who knew or worked with John Paul.

<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/International/pope-john-paul-whipped-belt/story?id=9674114>