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Polish Cardinal Nagy, friend and adviser to Pope John Paul II, dies at 91

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Polish Cardinal Stanislaw Nagy -- a close friend, theological adviser to and skiing partner of Blessed John Paul II -- died Wednesday in Krakow at the age of 91.

Like the late pope, Nagy studied at Jagiellonian University in Krakow and taught at the Catholic University of Lublin. He used to ski with the future pope near Zakopane in the Tatra Mountains and served the then-archbishop of Krakow as a theological consultant in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

He began teaching at Lublin in 1958 and in the 1970s became the first director of the faculty of comparative and ecumenical theology. He was a Vatican-appointed member of the Catholic-Lutheran international dialogue and a papally appointed member of the International Theological Commission, which advises the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Sending his condolences to Catholics in Krakow, Pope Francis remembered "with affection this dear brother who generously served the Gospel and the church, especially in the academic world where he was an appreciated scholar and expert teacher of theological disciplines."

Pope Francis said Nagy also would be remembered for the "fruitful collaboration, cordial friendship and mutual esteem he shared with Blessed John Paul II, as well as for his intense ecumenical activity."

Born Sept. 30, 1921, at Bierun, near Katowice, he joined the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, also known as the Dehonians, at age 16, professed permanent vows under Nazi occupation in 1941, and was ordained a priest in 1945.

Pope John Paul named him a cardinal in 2003. The Polish theologian was already over 80 at the time, so did not participate in the conclaves that elected Popes Benedict XVI or Pope Francis.

His death leaves the College of Cardinals with 204 members, 112 of whom are under the age of 80 and therefore eligible to vote in a conclave.

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