



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO IRELAND

### **ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO VISITING CATHOLIC BISHOPS**

*Dublin*

*Saturday, 29 September 1979*

*Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,*

That so many of you have come from different countries, to share with me the various moments of my visit, is a tribute both to Ireland and to yourselves, for it proves that you feel united with the Bishop of Rome in his "solicitude for all the churches" (2 Cor 11 :28), and at the same time it shows that you want to honour the faith of the Church in Ireland.

For is it not true that the Christian communities you represent have to discharge a duty of gratitude to the Church in Ireland? You who come from other European nations feel a particular relationship with the people that brought forth so many and so great missionaries, who in centuries past travelled untiringly across the mountains and rivers and through the plains of Europe to support the faith when it was flagging, to revive the Christian communities, and preach the word of the Lord. The vitality of the Church in Ireland made the establishing of many of your own communities possible. *Peregrinari pro Christo* : to be a voyager, a pilgrim for Christ was their reason for leaving their dear native land; and the Church in Europe was given new life by their journeyings.

Outside the continent, Irish immigrants, priests and missionaries were again the founders of new dioceses and parishes, the builders of churches and schools, and their faith succeeded, sometimes against overwhelming odds, to bring Christ to new regions, and to imbue new communities with the same undivided love for Jesus and his Mother, and with the same loyalty and affection for the Apostolic See in Rome as they had known in their homeland.

As we reflect on these historical realities, and as we witness together, during this visit, the piety, the faith and the vitality of the Irish Church, we cannot but feel blessed for these moments. Your presence here will in turn be an encouragement for the Irish Episcopate and for the Irish Christians, since in seeing you gathered around the Bishop of Rome, they will see that it is the whole *Collegium Episcopale* that offers support to the local Pastors and assumes its share of responsibility for the Church that is in Ireland. Let your love for Ireland and your appreciation of Ireland's place in the Church be expressed in prayer for a speedy return to peace in this beautiful island. Lead your faithful people in this earnest and untiring prayer to the Prince of Peace, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

When the people of this beloved country see you, gathered together with the Irish Bishops around the Bishop of Rome, they witness that special union that constitutes a core of the episcopal collegiality, a union of mind and heart, a union of commitment and dedication in the building up of the Body of Christ, that is the Church. It is this profound union, this sincere "communion" that confers depth and meaning to the concept of collegiality and that carries it beyond a mere practical collaboration or a sharing of insights. It then becomes a bond that truly unites the Bishops of the whole world with the Successor of Peter and among themselves, in order to carry out *cum Petro et sub Petro* the apostolic ministry which the Lord entrusted to the Twelve. Knowing that such are the sentiments that animate your presence here with me not only gives me satisfaction but also supports me in my own unique and universal pastoral ministry.

From this union among all the Bishops will flow forth for each ecclesial community, and for the Church as a whole, abundant fruits of unity and communion among all the faithful and with their Bishops, as well as with the visible Head of the universal Church.

Thank you for sharing with me the privilege and the supernatural grace of this visit. May the Lord Jesus bless you and your dioceses with ever more abundant fruits of union in mind and heart. And may every Christian everywhere, and the whole Church of God as one, increasingly become a sign and a presence of hope for all of humanity.

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