



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
TO NORWAY, ICELAND, FINLAND,
DENMARK AND SWEDEN

WELCOME CEREMONY IN DENMARK

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Military Airport of Copenhagen-Vaerlose
Tuesday, 6 June 1989

Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Members of Government,
Dear People of Denmark,

1. It is with distinct pleasure that I greet you and all the people of Denmark. My visit to your country is an expression of the esteem which I have *for the Kingdom of Denmark and all her people*. Throughout her history, Denmark has commanded the respect of her neighbours, not only for the courage of her warriors, but also, and more importantly, for the high ideals which have guided her growth as a nation. Today, those ideals continue to find expression in a thriving cultural and intellectual life. They provide the support for a healthy civic and social life, and they find a deep source of inspiration and renewal in the religious faith of so many men and women among you. Within the international community, Denmark has long been esteemed for the expression which those ideals have found in the generosity and solidarity which mark your relations with the developing nations of the world.

Indeed, for all their ancient strength and unity as a people, *Danes have never been isolated from the rest of the family of nations*. For over a thousand years, Denmark has stood as a geographical link *between the Nordic peoples and the rest of Europe*. Her notable contributions to science, the arts and literature have been a source of enrichment for the entire world. This heritage is both a cause for pride and a stimulus to further action of this kind.

For these reasons, I am pleased to have this opportunity to set foot upon Danish soil today. I wish to *express my gratitude to Queen Margrethe, to you, Mr Prime Minister, and to all those civil and ecclesiastical authorities who have helped to make this visit possible.*

2. I have come to Denmark *as the Bishop of Rome*, as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and as one who is committed, as you are committed, to the search for authentic peace in our world. My *journey* brings me *to the Catholics* of Denmark, my brothers and sisters in Christ. In accordance with the ministry I received, I have come to pray with them, to celebrate the sacraments with them and to strengthen them in the bonds of ecclesial communion which unite them with the Catholic Church throughout the world. It is my hope that this visit of the Successor of Peter will serve to confirm them in the faith they have received, so that they may come to know more deeply Christ Jesus and the power of his resurrection.

I have also come with the intention of meeting the *bishops and people of the Danish Lutheran Church*, as well as representatives of the various Christian Ecclesial Communities present in Denmark. This ecumenical aspect of my visit is one that is dear to me. In our days, Christians throughout the world are seeking to overcome the divisions and disagreements which have long separated us. In conformity with the will of Christ who prayed that his disciples might all be one (Cfr. *Jo. 17, 21*), we seek the grace of reconciliation and a renewed commitment to bringing the Gospel's message of hope to the world. I am grateful for this privileged moment, and I pray that my presence, and the Gospel I preach, may encourage all Christians to cherish more deeply the gift of faith which we have received.

3. The Christian faith remains, in our own day, as it has for a thousand years, an inspiration and a support for Denmark's people. The very symbol of your existence as a people, the *Dannebrog*, is *marked with the sign of the Cross*. Under this banner, Denmark has grown strong in her identity as a nation and her people have prospered. In our times, cooperation and mutual support among all nations has become our only hope for the attainment of peace and a just distribution of the world's goods. Here too, Denmark has demonstrated a generous solidarity in accord with the best of her traditions. In the international community, your country is known for her concern for the welfare of all and the advancement of human rights. Your hospitality towards refugees and foreigners at home is matched by your assistance to the developing nations of the Third World.

These *generous contributions to the advancement of peoples* and their social progress are an expression of values deeply implanted in the soul of the Danish people. May you always be faithful to those values, treasuring them as part of your country's great riches and passing them on to your children. Our age needs to be challenged by this example. It longs for a witness to authentic generosity and self-sacrifice for the good of others. At a time when many are tempted to live for the day and selfishly to exploit the resources which nature has provided for all, Denmark can raise her voice in defence of all those who have no voice: the poor, the underprivileged, and those not yet born. In doing so, she will be faithful to the *Dannebrog*, faithful to her very self.

Dear friends: with every passing day, *a new world is struggling to be born*. Mankind lies poised between a future of hope and promise, and a future of violence and poverty. Each of us, in our families and communities, in our churches and governments, has a role to play in giving birth to this new world. I am grateful to you for all that you have done, and all that you are doing, to bring about the dawn of *an age of understanding and cooperation among peoples*, and a commitment to the good of all people, especially those who most need your help. Your pursuit of these noble goals will always have my support and gratitude. In this regard, I am pleased to recall the establishment of *diplomatic relations between Denmark and the Holy See*. It is my hope that these relations will serve the cause of increasing understanding among peoples, and contribute to the growth of that peace for which we all long. God bless each and every one of you! May God bless Denmark and all her people!

Gud velsigne Danmark. Gud velsigne jere alle.

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