



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AT THE VIEWING OF A FILM
ON THE LIFE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**

Thursday, 19 May 2005

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am certain to interpret the common sentiments and express living gratitude to those who wanted to offer me and all of you the opportunity to view this moving film tonight; it traces the life of young Karol Wojtyła, leading to his election as the Pontiff known as "John Paul II".

I greet and thank Cardinal Roberto Tucci for his introduction to the film. I then address a word of admiration to the director and writer, Giacomo Battiato, and to the actors, especially Piotr Adamczyk who played the part of John Paul II, to the producer Pietro Valsecchi and to the networks "Taodue" and "Mediaset".

I cordially greet the other Cardinals, Bishops, priests, Authorities and all those who wanted to take part in this viewing in honour of the beloved Pontiff, recently deceased. We all remember him with deep affection and heartfelt gratitude. Yesterday, he would have celebrated his 85th birthday.

"Karol, un uomo diventato Papa" [Karol, a man who became Pope] is the title of the drama, taken from a text by Gian Franco Svidercoschi. The first segment, as we have seen, highlights the situation in Poland under the Nazi regime, with emphasis - now and then very emotionally strong - given to the repression of the Polish people and to the genocide of the Jews. These are atrocious crimes that show all of the evil that was contained in the Nazi ideology.

Young Karol, shocked by so much suffering and violence, decided to do something about it in his own life, answering the divine call to the priesthood. The film presents scenes and episodes that, in their severity, awaken in the viewers an instinctive "turning away" in horror and stimulates them

to consider the abyss of iniquity that can be hidden in the human soul.

At the same time, calling to the fore such aberration revives in every right-minded person the duty to do what he or she can so that such inhuman barbarism never happens again.

Today's viewing takes place just some days after the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. On 8 May 1945 the conclusion was marked of that frightful tragedy which sowed destruction and death, in a measure never-before heard of, in Europe and in the world.

Ten years ago, John Paul II wrote that World War II appears with evermore clarity as a "suicide of humanity". Each time a totalitarian ideology crushes man, humanity as a whole is seriously threatened. With the passing of time, memories do not have to fade; rather, they must be a stern lesson for this and future generations. We have the responsibility of reminding especially youth of the forms of unprecedented violence that can lead to contempt for men and women and the violation of their rights.

Under the light of Providence, how can we not read as a divine plan the fact that on the Chair of Peter, a Polish Pope is succeeded by a citizen of that Country, Germany, where the Nazi regime was the most vicious, attacking the nearby nations, Poland among them?

In their youth, both of these Popes - even if on opposing fronts and in different situations - knew the cruelty of the Second World War and of the senseless violence of men fighting men, people fighting people.

During the final days of the Second Vatican Council held here in Rome, the Polish Bishops consigned the "letter of reconciliation" to the German Bishops; the letter contained those famous words that today too resound in our souls: "We forgive and we ask forgiveness".

In last [Sunday's Homily](#) I reminded the newly-ordained priests that "nothing can improve the world if evil is not overcome. Evil can be overcome only by forgiveness" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition, 18 May, p. 7). May the mutual and sincere condemnation of Nazism, as with atheistic communism, be everyone's duty for the building of reconciliation and peace on forgiveness.

"To forgive", our beloved John Paul II again reminds us, "does not mean to forget", adding that "if memory is the law of history, forgiveness is the power of God, the power of Christ that works in the vicissitudes of man" (cf. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII/2 [1994], p. 250). Peace is, in the first place, a gift of God, who makes sentiments of love and solidarity arise in the heart of the person who welcomes it.

I hope that, thanks also to this witness of Pope John Paul II commemorated in this meaningful film, there will be a revival on the part of each person in the proposal to work - each in his or her own field and according to one's means - at the service of a definite action for peace in Europe and in

the entire world.

I entrust the hope of peace that all of us carry in our heart to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, who is venerated especially in this month of May. May she, Queen of Peace, encourage the generous contribution of those who intend to put their efforts toward the building of true peace on the solid pillars of truth, justice, freedom and love. With these sentiments, I extend to all my Apostolic Blessing.

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