



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO A DELEGATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF TRAUNSTEIN

*Courtyard of the Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 30 July 2011*

Dear Friends,

A cordial greeting to all of you who have come from Chiemgau and Rupertiwinkel. With you, as the *Landrat* [county commissioner] said, Castel Gandolfo has become a Bavarian village and this makes me glad, for through you my Bavarian homeland is present here. May the Lord reward you!

I extend to you, dear Mr *Landrat*, my deep gratitude for your heartfelt words: they came from your heart and they have touched my heart; they outlined a picture of our homeland while at the same time reaffirming your ties with me. That this ring of honour should be awarded to me unanimously, over and above every party membership, every difference which — rightly — exists, gives me great joy.

For me it is a sign that with you I am truly “at home”, that we welcome each other and that I continue to belong to you. I am happy and grateful for my beautiful land and for this marvellous evening you have offered me. May the Lord reward you!

The ring of honour will probably not be seen on my finger, but it will be displayed in such a way that I always have it before my eyes to remind me of what, in any case, I know in the depths of my heart: I am at home there in Chiemgau and in Rupertiwinkel, in the places of my youth that you have mentioned. I am grateful to you because, if only for an instant, you have enabled me to relive the beauty and joy of the Bavarian culture.

Dear Mr *Landrat*! You spoke of our country as a “terra benedicta” [blessed land] and mentioned the monks who developed this culture of joy among us. Thanks to the Creator our land is truly a

“terra benedicta”: he gave us mountains, lakes, valleys and woods. We must be grateful to him for them, because he has entrusted such a precious part of the earth to us. However, our land is fully a “terra benedicta” essentially because the faith of men and women has been touched by the beauty of creation and by the goodness of the Creator. Touched by him, they were able to endow our land with its full splendour and the capacity for reflecting it.

What would Bavaria be without its towers with the onion-shape domes of our churches, without the splendour of the Baroque and the joy of the redeemed that expands within them? Without our music, the sacred music — which gives you a direct glimpse of Heaven — and our profane music? A warm “thank you” to you, musicians: you have given an excellent performance of Bavarian music here and have reminded me once again that I am at home in Bavaria, that I came from there and continue to belong to that land. May the Lord reward you!

Without the churches, wayside crosses and chapels — as the provincial councillor has also recalled — Bavaria would not be Bavaria; without its music, its poetry, the affability and cordiality and joy that we have just felt. Joy, cordiality and kindness only increase, however, if the skies above us are clear. The sun does not shine every day, as you said too, Mr *Landrat*; at times we must pass through dark valleys. Yet we can do so remaining joyful and human — if the sky is clear for us, if we are touched by the certainty that he loves us in all things, that God is good and that this is why it is good to be a human being.

Bavaria has become what it is on the basis of this certainty, and let us all pray and hope that it will remain so. In order for it to stay like this and continue to be ever beautiful and for people to be able to continue to say “yes” to life and to the future, it is important that we do not lose the splendour of faith, that we remain believers, Christians, Catholics, wherever Catholic also means always being “open to the world” — that is, the world, life and faith at the same time — it means being tolerant and open to each other and to warm brotherhood for those who know they belong to the one Father and are loved by the one Lord.

This is my prayer; let us allow ourselves to be touched by faith, let us allow ourselves to be guided by faith so that the splendour of Heaven may reach us and illuminate the world in its wretchedness, making it beautiful and bright.

For my part, I promise you that my land is ever present in my prayers, and as a pledge of this I now impart to you the Apostolic Blessing.

May the Lord reward you! I wish you a pleasant stay at Castel Gandolfo! Give Bavaria my greetings.

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