



The Holy See

HOLY MASS CELEBRATED IN POLISH IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 7 January 1979

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With great emotion I celebrate the Eucharist in my native language. I do this in the Sistine Chapel, in this place where on 16 October 1978 I heard the new call of Christ the Lord and accepted it in the spirit of obedience of faith to my Saviour and of full confidence in Our Lady, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. Today, for the first time, I am celebrating the Eucharist in the same place in my native language, taking advantage of the invitation of the Vatican Radio, which will henceforth broadcast the Holy Mass in the Polish language every Sunday, for all those for whom it is difficult to take part in Mass in any other way.

So I express my great joy and thanks to God for this event, which fulfils the desire long expressed by my fellow countrymen in Poland and all over the world. It is known that, in the different countries of the world, the language of our fathers continues to be the language of prayer for many people. I am happy that today, thanks to the radio, I can reach them with all these people present here in the unity of the eucharistic sacrifice. I am confident that, in the same way, I will be able to meet and unite with my brothers and sisters also in other languages. I consider this unity in the Holy Eucharist, in the liturgy of the word, in the liturgy of the sacrifice made by the body and blood of Jesus Christ, essential and fundamental for the Successor of Peter, for this apostle to whom the Lord said: "when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk 22: 32).

When today, celebrating the sacrifice of Christ, I meet you, beloved fellow countrymen, I remember those annual meetings at which, as Archbishop of Krakow, I was honoured to find myself again with the representatives of all the parishes of our royal city. This always happened on the festivity of the Three Wise Kings. It was in the evening hours, during Mass in Wawel cathedral.

At those moments we all wished one another a happy new year too. Today I want to repeat these wishes in such unusual circumstances. For at this moment the representatives of the archdiocese of Krakow and of the Poles resident in Rome, who came here yesterday to take part in the episcopal consecration of my successor to the See of the archdiocese of Krakow, are in the Sistine Chapel. To all of them, and among them in particular to the Metropolitan of Krakow, I address my good wishes, which I take from the very heart of the Eucharist.

I am happy at your presence, beloved brothers and sisters, who have come from dear Krakow and the archdiocese. Allow me to extend these good wishes of mine even more: to the whole of our dear country, to all my fellow countrymen, to all those who are listening to me at this moment and also to all those who cannot listen to me now. I am addressing these good wishes of mine to all families, to all generations, to the old, the sick, the suffering, to men full of strength, to parents and educators; at the same time, to all young people and all children, to men engaged in hard, physical work, to scientists and men of culture. I address these good wishes of mine to all professions without exception. Every year, we used to meet in various groups, in the month of January, during the occasion of "oplatek" ("oplatek" is the blessed bread which families exchange with one another, breaking it among them, as a sign of unity). I do the same in spirit before you all. With this gesture at the beginning of the new year, with this gesture of the hand and of the heart, I want to reach the whole Church in Poland, all dioceses and parishes, religious men and women, all priests, all brothers in the episcopate with our beloved Primate, first of all. In spirit, I go to all Catholic centres of higher studies, to all seminaries, all novitiates, all communities of the young, gathered in spiritual retreats, in the work to form the new man in Jesus Christ.

The year 1979 is the year of the jubilee of Saint Stanislaus: it is nine hundred years since his martyrdom. In the jubilee of this patron saint of the Poles, in the first days of the jubilee year, I wish first and foremost for the spiritual unity for which Saint Stanislaus, his sacrifice first of all and then his canonization, became the source and inspiration for our ancestors. Today we need the same spiritual unity of our country, after so many trials in the course of its history. We need the unity of the spirit and the strength of the spirit. And these are my warmest wishes. I want these wishes to reach everyone. I hope that all those who are in power in our country may serve well the common good of the whole nation; the nation for which I desire peace with my whole heart; for which, as its son, I desire all good; it deserves to be respected in the large family of nations. This Church has lived for a thousand years in faithful and tenacious service of the nation and today, too, it serves this nation.

In today's liturgy the prophet Isaiah speaks of the future Messiah, Christ:

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice

in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law." (Is 42:1-4.)

My wish for everyone is that Christ, Jesus Christ, may be with you in the year that has begun, the year 1979 after his birth, *Anno Domini. Amen.*

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