



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND

HOLY MASS AND ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE MOTHER OF GOD

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Czestochowa - Jasna Gora, 4 June 1979

1. "Holy Virgin guarding bright Czestochowa..."

To my mind come back these words of the poet Mickiewicz, who in an invocation to the Virgin at the beginning of his "Pan Tadeusz" expressed what then beat and still beats in the hearts of all Poles, by making use of *the language of faith* and that of our *national tradition*. It is a tradition that goes back some 600 years to the time of the blessed Queen Hedwig at the dawn of the Jagellonian dynasty. The image of Jasna Gora expresses a tradition and a language of faith still more ancient than our history and also reflecting the whole of *the content of the Bogurodzica*, on which we meditated yesterday at Gniezno, recalling the mission of Saint Wojciech (Adalbert) and going back to the first moments of the proclamation of the Gospel in the land of Poland.

She who once spoke in song, later spoke in this *Image*, manifesting through it her maternal *presence* in the life of the Church and of the motherland. The Virgin of Jasna Gora has revealed her maternal *solicitude* for every soul; for every family; for *every human being* living in this land, working here, fighting and falling on the battlefield, condemned to extermination, fighting against himself, winning or losing; for every human being who must leave the soil of his motherland as an emigrant; for every human being.

The Poles are accustomed to link with this place, this shrine, the many happenings of their lives: the various joyful or sad moments, especially the solemn, decisive moments, the occasions of responsibility, such as the choice of the direction for one's life, the choice of one's vocation, the birth of one's children, the final school examinations, and so many other occasions. They are

accustomed to come with their problems to Jasna Gora to speak of them with their heavenly Mother, who not only has her image here, one of the best known and most venerated pictures of her in the world, but *is specially present here*. She is present in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, as the Council teaches. She is present for each and every one of those who come on pilgrimage to her, even if only in spirit and heart when unable to do so physically.

The Poles are accustomed to do this.

It is a custom also with related peoples, with neighbouring nations. More and more people are coming here from all over Europe and outside Europe.

During the great novena, the Cardinal Primate expressed himself as follows with regard to the significance of the shrine of Czestochowa for the life of the Church:

"What has happened at Jasna Gora?

"We are still unable to give an adequate answer. Something has happened that is beyond our powers of imagining... Jasna Gora has shown itself an inward bond in Polish life, a force that touches the depths of our hearts and holds the entire nation in the humble yet strong attitude of fidelity to God, to the Church and to her Hierarchy... For many of us it was a great surprise to see the power of the Queen of Poland display itself so magnificently".

It is no wonder then that I too should come here today. I have, in fact, taken with me from Poland to the chair of Saint Peter in Rome this "holy habit" of the heart, which has been built up by the faith of so many generations, has been tested by the Christian experience of so many centuries, and is deeply rooted in my soul.

2. Several times Pope *Pius XI* came here, naturally not as Pope but as Achille Ratti, the first Nuncio in Poland after the recovery of independence.

After the death of Pius XII, when Pope *John XXIII* was elected to the Chair of Peter, the first words of the new Pontiff to the Primate of Poland after the Conclave were a reference to Jasna Gora. He recalled his visits here during his years as Apostolic Delegate in Bulgaria and he asked above all for unceasing prayer to the Mother of God for the intentions involved in his new mission. His *request was satisfied every day at Jasna Gora*, not only during his pontificate but also during those of his Successors.

We all know how much Pope Paul VI wanted to come here in pilgrimage. He was so closely connected with Poland from the time of his first diplomatic appointment in the Warsaw Nunciature. He was the Pope that did so much for the normalization of the life of the Church in Poland, particularly with regard to the present arrangement of the territories in the west and the north. He

was the Pope of our Millennium. It was for the Millennium that he wanted to be here as a pilgrim together with the sons and daughters of the Polish Nation.

After the Lord called Pope Paul VI to himself on the solemnity of the Transfiguration last year, the Cardinals chose his Successor on 26 August, the day on which Poland, and especially Jasna Gora, celebrates the solemnity of Our Lady of Czestochowa. The news of the election of the new Pope, John Paul I, was communicated to the faithful by the Bishop of Czestochowa in the course of the evening celebration.

What must I say of myself, to whom after the barely 33-day pontificate of John Paul I it fell, on 16 October 1978, by the inscrutable decree of Providence to receive his inheritance and the apostolic succession to the Chair of Saint Peter? What must I say, I who am the first non-Italian Pope for 455 years? What must I say, I, John Paul II, the first Polish Pope in the history of the Church? I will tell you: on that 16 October, the day on which the liturgical calendar of the Church in Poland recalls 'Saint Hedwig, I went back in thought to 26 August, to the preceding Conclave and the election that took place on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Jasna Gora.

I had no need even to say, as my Predecessors said, that I was going to count on the prayers offered at the foot of the image of Jasna Gora. The call of a son of the Polish nation to the Chair of Peter involves an evident strong connection with this holy place, with this shrine of great hope: so many times I had whispered *Totus tuus* in prayer before this image.

3. And *today* I am again *with all of you*, dear brothers and sisters; with you, beloved fellow-countrymen; with you, the Cardinal Primate of Poland; with all the Episcopate to which I belonged for more than twenty years as Bishop, Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow and as Cardinal. So many times we came here to this holy place with attentive pastoral ear, to listen to the beating of the heart of the Church and of that of the motherland in the heart of the Mother. Jasna Gora is, in fact, not only a place of pilgrimage for the Poles of the motherland and of the whole world but also *the nation's shrine*. One must listen in this holy place in order to hear the beating of the heart of the nation in the heart of the Mother. For her heart beats, we know, together with all the appointments of history, with all the happenings in our national life: how many times, in fact, has it vibrated with the laments of the historical sufferings of Poland, but also with the shouts of joy and victory! The history of Poland can be written in different ways; especially in the case of the history of the last centuries, it can be interpreted along different lines. But if we want to know how this history is interpreted by the heart of the Poles, we must come here, we must listen to this shrine, we must hear the echo of the life of the whole nation in the heart of its Mother and Queen. And if her heart beats with a tone of disquiet, if it echoes with solicitude and the cry for the conversion and strengthening of consciences, this invitation must be accepted. It is an invitation springing from maternal love, which in its own way is shaping the historical processes in the land of Poland.

The last decades have confirmed and intensified that unity between the Polish nation and its Queen. Before the Virgin of Czestochowa there was pronounced the consecration of Poland to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 8 September 1946. Ten years later the vows of King Jan Kazimierz were renewed at Jasna Gora on the 300th anniversary of the time when he, after a period referred to as one of deluge (the seventeenth-century Swedish invasion), proclaimed the Mother of God

Queen of the Polish Kingdom. On that anniversary began the great nine-year novena in preparation for the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland. Finally, in the year of the Millennium itself, on 3 May 1966, in this place the Primate of Poland pronounced the act of total servitude to the Mother of God for the freedom of the Church in Poland and throughout the world. This historic act was pronounced here, before Paul VI, absent in body but present in spirit, as a testimony of that lively and strong faith expected and demanded by the present time.

The act speaks of "servitude". It contains a paradox similar to the words of the Gospel according to which one must lose one's life to find it (cf. Mt 10:39). For love constitutes the fulfilment of freedom, yet at the same time "belonging", and so not being free is part of its essence. However, this "not being free" in love is not felt as slavery but rather as an affirmation and fulfilment of freedom. The act of consecration in slavery indicates therefore a unique dependence and a limitless trust. In this sense slavery (non-freedom) expresses the fullness of freedom, in the same way as the Gospel speaks of the need to lose one's life in order to find it in its fullness.

The words of that act, which were spoken with the language of the historical experiences of Poland, the language of her sufferings and also of her victories, receive a response in this very moment of the life of the Church and of the world, *after the close of the Second Vatican Council*, which, as we rightly think, has opened a new era. The Council began an age of deeper knowledge of man, of his "joy and hope, grief and anguish", as is stated in the first words of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Aware of her great dignity and her magnificent vocation in Christ, the Church wishes to go to meet man. *The Church* wishes to respond to the eternal yet ever topical queries of human hearts and human history. For that reason she carried out during the Council a work of *deeper* knowledge of herself, her nature, her mission, her tasks.

On 3 May 1966 the Polish Episcopate added to this fundamental work by the Council its own act of Jasna Gora: the consecration to the Mother of God for the freedom of the Church in the world and in Poland. It was a cry coming forth from the heart and the will: a cry of the whole of the Christian being, from the person and the community, for the full right to proclaim the saving message; a cry that willed to have universal effectiveness by striking root in the present age and in the future. Everything *through Mary*. This is the authentic interpretation of the presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, as is proclaimed by Chapter VIII of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. This interpretation corresponds to the tradition of the saints, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Grignon de Monfort and Maximilian Kolbe.

4. Pope *Paul VI* accepted this act of consecration as the fruit of the celebration of the Polish Millennium of Jasna Gora, as is shown by his bull placed close to the image of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Today, on coming to Jasna Gora, his *unworthy Successor* wishes to renew it on the day after Pentecost, the very day on which is celebrated throughout Poland *the feast of the Mother of the Church*.

For the first time the Pope is celebrating this solemnity, expressing together with you, Venerable and dear Brothers, his gratitude towards his great Predecessor, who from the time of the Council began to invoke Mary with the title of the Mother of the Church.

This title enables us to enter into the whole of the mystery of Mary from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, passing through the Annunciation, the Visitation and the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, to Calvary. It enables us all to be—the scene is recalled in today's liturgy—in *the upper room*, where the Apostles devoted themselves to prayer, together with Mary the Mother of Jesus, as they waited, after the Lord's Ascension, for the fulfilment of his promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, in order that the Church might be born. A special participation in the birth of the Church is had by her to whom we owe the birth of Christ.

The Church, which was once born in the Pentecost upper room, continues to be born in every upper room of prayer. She is born to become *our spiritual Mother in the likeness of the Mother of the Eternal Word*. She is born to reveal the characteristics and power of that motherhood (the motherhood of the Mother of God) thanks to which we can "be called children of God; and so we are" (1 Jn 3:1). For, in his plan of salvation, the holy fatherhood of God used the virginal *motherhood of his lowly handmaiden* to bring about in the children of man the work of the divine author.

Dear fellow-countrymen, venerable and beloved Brothers in the Episcopate, Pastors of the Church in Poland, illustrious guests, and all of you the faithful: consent that I, as Saint Peter's Successor present with you here today, should entrust the whole of the Church to the Mother of Christ with the same lively faith, the same heroic hope, with which we did so on the memorable day of 3 May of the Polish Millennium.

Consent that I should bring here, as I did already in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome and later in the Shrine of Guadalupe in Mexico, the mysteries of the hearts, the sorrow and suffering, and finally the hope and expectation of this final period of the twentieth century of the Christian era.

Consent that I should *entrust* all this to Mary.

Consent that I should *entrust it* to her in a new and solemn way.

I am a man of great trust.

I learnt to be so here.

Amen.

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE MOTHER OF GOD

"Great Mother of God made man, Most Holy Virgin, Our Lady of Jasna Gora..."

With these words the Polish Bishops addressed you so many times at Jasna Gora, bearing in their hearts the experiences and the sufferings, the joy and the sorrow, and, above all, the faith, hope and charity of their fellow-countrymen.

May I be permitted today to begin with the same words *the new act of consecration to Our Lady of Jasna Gora*. This new act springs from that same faith, hope and charity, and from the tradition of our people shared by me for so many years. It springs at the same time from the new duties that, thanks to you, Mary, have been entrusted to me, an unworthy man and also your adoptive son.

How meaningful for me always have been the words that your Son, born from you, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man, spoke from the height of the Cross, pointing out John, apostle and evangelist: "Woman, behold, your son!" (Jn 19:26). In these words I always found the place for every human being and the place for myself.

By the inscrutable designs of Divine Providence I am today present here at Jasna Gora, in my earthly homeland, Poland, and I wish *first of all to confirm* the acts of consecration and of trust that at various times—"in many and various ways" were pronounced by the Cardinal Primate and the Polish Episcopate. In a very special way I wish to confirm and renew the act of consecration pronounced at Jasna Gora on *3 May 1966*, on the occasion of the Millennium of Poland. With this act the Polish Bishops wished, by giving themselves to you, Mother of God, "in your maternal slavery of love", to serve the great cause of *the freedom of the Church* not only in their own homeland but in the whole world. Some years later, on 7 June 1976, they consecrated to you *all of humanity*, all the nations and peoples of the modern world, and their brothers and sisters who are close to them by faith, by language and by the destinies they share in history, extending this consecration to the furthest limits of love as is demanded by your heart, the heart of a Mother who embraces each and every person, always and everywhere.

Today I come to Jasna Gora as its first pilgrim Pope, and I wish to renew the entire heritage of trust, of consecration and of hope that has been accumulated here with such magnanimity by my Brothers in the Episcopate and my fellow-countrymen.

Therefore, I entrust to you, Mother of the Church, all the problems of this Church, the whole of her mission and of her service, while the second millennium of the history of Christianity on earth is about to draw to a close.

Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Seat of Wisdom, it is to your intercession that we owe the magnificent *vision and the programme of renewal of the Church* in our age that found expression

in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Grant that we may make this vision and programme the object of our activity, our service, our teaching, our pastoral care, our apostolate—in the same truth, simplicity and fortitude with which the Holy Spirit has made them known through our humble service. Grant that the whole Church may be reborn by drawing from this new fount of the knowledge of her nature and mission, and not from other foreign or poisoned "cisterns" (cf. Jer 8:14).

Help us in the great endeavour that we are carrying out *to meet in a more and more mature way our brothers in faith*, with whom so many things unite us, although there is still something dividing us. Through all the means of knowledge, of mutual respect, of love, of shared collaboration in various fields, may we be able to rediscover gradually the divine plan for the unity into which we should enter and bring everybody in, in order that the one fold of Christ may recognize and live its unity on earth. *Mother of unity*, teach us constantly the ways that lead to unity.

Allow us in the future to go out *to meet all human beings and all peoples* that are seeking God and wishing to serve him on the way *of different religions*. Help us all to proclaim Christ and reveal "the power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24) hidden in his Cross. You were the first to reveal him at Bethlehem, not only to the simple faithful shepherds but also to the wise men from distant lands.

Mother of Good Counsel, show us always how we are to serve the individual and humanity in every nation, how we are to lead them along the ways of salvation. How we are to protect *justice and peace* in a world continually threatened on various sides. How greatly I desire on the occasion of our meeting today to entrust to you all the *difficult problems* of the societies, systems and states—problems that cannot be solved with hatred, war and self-destruction but only by peace, justice and respect for the rights of people and of nations.

Mother of the Church, grant that the Church may enjoy freedom and peace in fulfilling her saving mission and that to this end she may become mature with *a new maturity* of faith and inner unity. Help us to overcome opposition and difficulties. Help us to rediscover all the simplicity and dignity of the Christian vocation. Grant that there may be no lack of "labourers in the Lord's vineyard". Sanctify families. Watch over the souls of the young and the hearts of the children. Help us to overcome the great moral threats against the fundamental spheres of life and love. Obtain for us the grace to be continually renewed through all the beauty of witness given to the Cross and Resurrection of your Son.

How many problems, Mother, should I not present to you by name in this meeting! *I entrust them all to you*, because you know them best and understand them.

I entrust them to you in the place of the great consecration, from which one has a view not only of Poland but of the whole Church in the dimensions of countries and continents—the whole Church

in your maternal heart.

I who am the first servant of the Church offer the whole Church to you and entrust it to you here with immense confidence, Mother. Amen.

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