



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

HOLY MASS FOR THE PILGRIMS FROM LOWER SILESIA AND SILESIA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Czestochowa, 5 June 1979

1. From Jasna Góra I wish to present a special votive offering to the shrine of Saint Hedwig in Trzebnica near Wroclaw. I have a special reason for doing so. In its inscrutable designs Divine Providence chose 16 October 1978 as a turning point in my life. On 16 October the Church in Poland celebrates Saint Hedwig, and for that reason I feel specially bound to make this votive offering today to the Church in Poland for the Saint who, as well as being the patroness of reconciliation between the neighbouring countries, is also the saint honoured on the day of the election of the first Pole to the Chair of Peter. I place this votive offering directly in the hands of all the pilgrims who have come today in such large numbers to Jasna Góra from all over Lower Silesia. I ask you, after your return to your province, to take this votive offering from the Pope to the shrine of Trzebnica, which became the new homeland that she chose for herself. Let it thus complete *the long history* of human events and works of divine Providence connected with Trzebnica and all your region.

2. Saint Hedwig, the wife of Henry the Bearded, of the Piast dynasty, came from the Bavarian family Andechs. She entered our country's history, and indirectly the history of the whole of Europe in the thirteenth century, as the "good wife" (Prov. 31:10) of which Scripture speaks. Our memories have specially engraved on them the event dominated by the figure of her son, Prince *Henry the Pious*. He it was who put up a strong resistance to the Tartar invasion that passed in 1241 through Poland from the East, from Asia, and stopping only in Silesia near Legnica. Henry the Pious fell, it is true, on the battlefield, but the Tartars were forced to retire and they never again came so close to the West in their raids. Behind the heroic son was his mother, who gave him

courage and recommended to the Crucified Christ the battle of Legnica. Her heart paid with the death of her son for the peace and security of the lands subject to her and also of the neighbouring lands and the whole of Western Europe.

During these occurrences Hedwig was already a widow, and as a widow she consecrated the rest of her life exclusively to God, entering the abbey of Trzebnica, which had been founded by her. Here she ended her holy life in 1243. Her canonization took place in 1267. This date is very close to that of the canonization in 1253 of Saint Stanislaus, the saint venerated by the Church in Poland for centuries as its principal Patron.

This year, on the occasion of the ninth centenary of his martyrdom at Skalka in Krakow, I, as the first Pope who am a son of the Polish nation, who was formerly Saint Stanislaus's successor on the Chair of Krakow and have now been elected to the Chair of Saint Peter, on Saint Hedwig's Day—I wish to send to her shrine of Trzebnica this votive offering from me marking *a further stage in the centuries of history* in which we all share.

3. To my votive offering I add my specially cordial good wishes for all taking part in this Sacred Eucharist that I am celebrating today at Jasna Góra. The Saints whom we are commemorating here today before Our Lady of Jasna Góra, offer us across the centuries a witness of unity between fellow-countrymen and of reconciliation between nations. I want to express my good wishes for this unity and reconciliation. For this I pray ardently.

Unity strikes root in the life of the nation, as in the difficult historical period for Poland it struck root through Saint Stanislaus, when human life at the various levels responds to the demands of *justice and love*. The family constitutes the first of these levels. And I wish to pray today with all of you, dear fellow-countrymen, for *the unity of all the families of Poland*. This unity has its origin in the sacrament of marriage, in the solemn promises with which a man and a woman become united with each other for the whole of life, repeating the sacramental "till death do us part". This unity comes from love and mutual trust, and bears fruit in the love and trust of the children towards their parents.

What a misfortune it would be if love and trust between husband and wife or between parents and children should weaken or crumble. Aware as we are of the evil brought by the falling apart of the family, let us today pray that nothing may happen which can destroy its unity, so that the family may continue to be truly *"the seat of justice and love"*.

Similar justice and love are needed by the nation, if it is to be inwardly united, *if it is to constitute an unbreakable unity*. Although it is impossible to compare the nation—that society composed of many millions of people—with the family—the smallest community, as we know, of human society—nevertheless unity depends on justice, a justice that satisfies the needs and guarantees the rights and duties of each member of the nation, so as not to give rise to disharmony and

opposition because of the differences brought by evident privileges for some and discrimination against others. From our country's history we know how difficult this task is; all the same we cannot exempt ourselves from the great effort aimed at building up just unity between the children of the same country. This must be accompanied by *love for this country, love for its culture and its history*, love for its specific values that determine its place in the great family of nations, love, finally, for our fellow-countrymen, people who speak the same language and have responsibility for the common cause to which we give the name of "our country".

As I pray today together with you for the internal unity of the nation of which Saint Stanislaus became Patron, especially in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, I wish to recommend to the Mother of God in Jasna Góra *reconciliation between the nations*, of which reconciliation we see one mediating in the figure of Saint Hedwig. As inward unity within each society or community, whether a nation or a family, depends on respect for the rights of each of its members, so international *reconciliation depends on recognition of and respect for the rights of each nation*. Chief of these are the rights to existence and self-determination, to its own culture and the many forms of developing it. We know from our own country's history what has been the cost to us of the infraction, the violation and the denial of those inalienable rights. Let us therefore pray with greater enthusiasm for *lasting reconciliation between the nations of Europe and the world*. May this be the fruit of recognition of and real respect for the rights of each nation.

4. *The Church* wishes to place herself at the service of unity among people; she desires to place herself at the service of reconciliation between nations. This belongs to her saving mission. Let us continually open our thoughts and hearts to the peace of which the Lord Jesus so often spoke to the Apostles, both before his Passion and after his Resurrection: "I leave you peace, my peace I give you" (Jn 14:27).

May this Pope who is today speaking here on the height of Jasna Góra *effectively serve the cause of unity and reconciliation in the modern world*. In this task keep assisting him with your prayers throughout the land of Poland.

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