



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND

HOLY MASS IN HONOR OF SAINT STANISLAUS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Krakow, 10 June 1979

Praised be Jesus Christ!

1. Today all of us gathered here together find ourselves *before a great, mystery in the history of the human race*: Christ, after his Resurrection met the Apostles in Galilee and spoke to them the words which we have just now heard from the lips of the deacon who proclaimed the Gospel: "Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Mt 28:18-20).

These words contain a great mystery in the history of humanity and in the history of the individual human person.

Every person goes forward. He or she goes forward towards the future. Nations also go forward. So does all humanity. To go forward, however, does not only mean to endure the exigencies of time, continuously leaving behind the past: yesterday, the years, the centuries. *To go forward also means being aware of the goal.*

Could it be perhaps that the human person and humanity itself journey only through this world and then disappear? Could it be perhaps that everything for a human being consists only in what is built, conquered, and enjoyed in this world? Beyond the conquests and the totality of life here (culture, civilization, technology) is there nothing else—awaiting a human person? "The form of

this world is passing away." *Is the human person going to pass away along with it?*

The words that Christ spoke in his farewell to the Apostles express the mystery of human history, the history of each person and of all persons, the mystery of the history of humanity.

Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is an immersion into the living God, into "Him who is" as the Book of Genesis puts it; into "Him who was, who is, and who will be" according to the Book of Revelation (1:4). Baptism is the beginning of an encounter, of a unity, of a communion for which earthly life is merely a preface, an introduction. The fulfilment and completion belong to eternity. "The form of this world is passing away". Therefore we must find the "world of God" to arrive at our destination, to find fulfilment in life and in the human vocation.

Christ has shown us the way and, in his farewell to his Apostles, he has reconfirmed this once more. He told them and the whole Church to teach and carry out all that he commanded: "And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world".

2. We always listen to words with the greatest emotion. They were spoken by the risen Redeemer to delineate the history of humanity and at the same time the history of each human person. When he says "*make disciples of all nations*", we see before our mind's eye the moment when the Gospel was first brought to our nation; the beginnings of its history when the first Poles were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual profile of the history of our motherland is traced out by these very words of Christ spoken to the Apostles. The spiritual profile of the history of each one of us is also traced out in about the same way.

A human person is a free and reasonable being. He or she is a knowing and responsible subject. He or she can and must, with the power of personal thought, come to know the truth. He or she can and must choose and decide. That Baptism, which was received at the beginning of Poland's history, makes us more conscious of the authentic greatness of the human person. "Immersion into water" is a sign of being called to participate in the life of the Most Blessed Trinity. At the same time it is an irreplaceable affirmation of the dignity of every human person. The very fact of the call itself already testifies to this. If he or she is called to such a participation, the human person must possess an exceptional dignity.

Likewise the whole historical process of a person's knowledge and choices is closely bound up with the living tradition of his or her own country where, down through all generations, the words of Christ echo and resound along with the witness of the Gospel, Christian culture, and the customs that derive from faith, hope and charity. A human being makes his choices with knowledge and with interior freedom. Here tradition is not a limiting factor but a treasure, a spiritual enrichment. It is a great common good which is confirmed by every choice, by every noble deed, by every life authentically viewed as Christian.

Can one cast all this off? Can one say no? Can one refuse Christ and all that he has brought into human history?

Certainly not. It is true that man is free. But the basic question remains: is it licit to do this? In whose name is this licit? By virtue of what rational argument, what value close to one's will and heart would it be possible to stand before yourself, your neighbour, your fellow-citizens, your country, in order to cast off, to say no to all that we have seen for one thousand years? To all that has created and .always constituted the basis of our identity?

One time Christ asked the Apostles (this took place after the promise of the institution of the Eucharist and many left him): "Do you too wish to go away?" (Jn 6: 67). Allow the Successor of Peter, before all of you gathered here together, before all of our history, before modern society, to repeat today the words of Peter which constituted his reply to the question of Christ. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" (Jn 6:68.)

3. Saint Stanislaus was, as historical sources confirm, the Bishop of Krakow for seven years. This Bishop, a fellow-citizen of ours, born in Szczepanow not far away from here, assumed the See of Krakow in 1072. He left it in 1079, suffering death at the hands of Boleslaus the Bold. The day of his death, the sources say, was 11 April and this is the day on which the liturgical calendar of the universal Church commemorates Saint Stanislaus. Poland the solemnity of this Bishop Martyr has been celebrated for centuries on 8 May and it continues thus even now.

When I, as the Metropolitan of Krakow, began with you to prepare for the ninth centenary of the death of Saint Stanislaus, which occurs this year, we all were still under the influence of the *one thousandth anniversary of the Baptism of Poland* which was celebrated in the year of our Lord 1966. Under the influence of this event and remembering the figure of Saint Adalbert, who also was a bishop and a martyr, whose life was connected in our history with the epoch of our Baptism, *the figure of Saint Stanislaus* seems to point (by analogy) to another sacrament, which is part of the Christian's initiation into the faith and into the life of the Church. This is the sacrament, as is well known, of the anointing or Confirmation. All of the jubilee studies of the mission of Saint Stanislaus in our thousand years of Christian history and all the spiritual preparation for this year's celebrations have reference to this sacrament of Confirmation.

This analogy has many aspects. Above all it parallels the normal development of a Christian life. Just as a baptized person comes to Christian maturity by means of this sacrament of Confirmation, so Divine Providence gave to our nation, after its Baptism, the historical moment of Confirmation. Saint Stanislaus, who was separated by almost a whole century from the period of the Baptism and from the mission of Saint Adalbert, especially symbolizes this moment by the fact that he rendered witness to Christ by his own blood. In the life of each Christian, usually a young Christian because it is in youth that one receives this sacrament—and Poland too was then a young nation, a young country—the sacrament of Confirmation must make him or her become a

"witness to Christ" according to the measure of one's own life and proper vocation. This is a sacrament which is especially associated with the mission of the Apostles inasmuch as it introduces every baptized person into the apostolate of the Church (especially into the so-called apostolate of the laity).

This is the sacrament which brings to birth within us a sharp sense of responsibility for the Church, for the Gospel, for the cause of Christ in the souls of human beings, and for the salvation of the world.

The sacrament of Confirmation is received by us only once in our lifetime (just as Baptism is received only once). All of life which opens up in view of this sacrament assumes the aspect of a great and fundamental test: *a test of faith and of character*. Saint Stanislaus has become, in the spiritual history of the Polish people, the patron of this great and fundamental test of faith and of character. In this sense we honour him also as the patron of the Christian moral order. In the final analysis the moral order is built up by means of human beings. This order consists of a large number of tests, each one a test of faith and of character. From every victorious test the moral order is built up. From every failed test moral disorder grows.

We know very well from our entire history that we must not permit, absolutely and at whatever cost, this disorder. For this we have already paid a bitter price many times.

This is therefore our meditation on the seven years of St Stanislaus, on his pastoral ministry in the See of Krakow, on the new examination of his relics, that is to say his skull, which still shows the marks of his mortal wounds—all of this leads us today to a great and ardent *prayer for the victory of the moral order in this difficult epoch of our history*.

This is the essential conclusion of all the hard work for this centennial, the principal condition and purpose of conciliar renewal for which the Synod of the Archdiocese of Krakow has so patiently worked, and also it is the main prerequisite for all pastoral work, for all the activity of the Church, for all tasks, for all duties and programmes which are being or will be undertaken in the land of Poland.

That this year of Saint Stanislaus would be a year of special historical maturity in our nation and in the Church. in Poland, a year of a *new and knowledgeable responsibility for the future of our country and of the Church in Poland*—this is the *vow* that I desire today, here with you my venerable and dear brothers and sisters, to make, as the first Pope of Polish stock, to the Immortal King of the ages, the Eternal Shepherd of our souls and of our history, the Good Shepherd!

4. Allow me now to sum up by embracing spiritually the whole of my pilgrimage to Poland, from its beginning on the eve of Pentecost at Warsaw to its conclusion today at Krakow on the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. *I wish to thank you, dear fellow-countrymen, for everything*. For having invited me and for having accompanied me along the whole course of the pilgrimage, through Gniezno of the Primate and through Jasna Gora. I thank again the State authorities for their kind invitation and their welcome. I thank the Authorities of the Provinces of Poznan, Czestochowa,

Nowy Sacz and Bielsko, as well as the Municipal Authorities of Warsaw and—for this final stage—the Municipal Authorities of the ancient royal City of Krakow, for all that they have done to make possible my stay and pilgrimage in Poland. I thank the Church in my homeland: the Episcopate, with the Cardinal Primate at its head, the Metropolitan of Krakow and my beloved brother Bishops, Julian, Jan Stanislaw and Albin, with whom it was granted to me to work for many years in preparing the Jubilee of Saint Stanislaus. I thank the whole of the clergy. I thank the religious orders of men and women. I thank you all and each one in particular. *It is our duty and salvation, always and everywhere to give thanks.*

I too wish now, on this last day of my pilgrimage through Poland, to open my heart wide and to speak aloud my thanks in the magnificent form of a Preface. How great is my desire that my thanksgiving will reach the Divine Majesty, the heart of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

My fellow-countrymen, with the greatest warmth I again give thanks, together with you, for *the gift of having been baptized more than a thousand years ago in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, the gift of having been immersed in the water which, through grace, perfects in us the image of the living God, in the water that is a ripple of eternity: "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14). I give thanks because we human beings, we Poles, each of whom was born as a human being of the flesh (cf. Jn 3:6) and blood of his parents, have been conceived and born of the Spirit (cf. Jn 3:5). Of the Holy Spirit.

Today, then, as I stand here in these broad meadows of Krakow and turn my gaze towards Wawel and Skalka, where nine hundred years ago "the renowned Bishop Stanislaus underwent death", I wish *to fulfil again what is done in the sacrament of Confirmation*, the sacrament that he symbolizes in our history. I wish what has been conceived and born of the Holy Spirit to be confirmed anew through the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which our fellow-countryman St Stanislaus shared in a special way.

Allow me, therefore, like the Bishops at Confirmation, to repeat today *the apostolic gesture of the laying on of hands*. For it expresses the acceptation and transmission of the Holy Spirit, whom the Apostles received from Christ himself after his Resurrection, when, "the doors being shut" (Jn 20:19), he came and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22).

This Spirit, the Spirit of salvation, of redemption, of conversion and holiness, the Spirit of truth, of love and of fortitude, the Spirit inherited from the Apostles as a living power, was time after time transmitted by the hands of the bishops to entire generations in the land of Poland. *This Spirit*, whom the Bishop that came from Szczepanow transmitted to the people of his time, *I today wish to transmit to you*, as I embrace with all my heart yet with deep humility the great "Confirmation of history" that you are living.

I repeat therefore *the words of Christ himself*: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20: 22).

I repeat *the words of the Apostle*: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19).

I repeat *the words of the Apostle*: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4:30).

You must be strong, dear brothers and sisters. You must be strong with the strength that comes from faith. You must be strong with the strength of *faith*. You must be faithful. Today more than in any other age you need this strength. You must be strong with the strength of *hope*, hope that brings the perfect joy of life and does not allow us to grieve the Holy Spirit.

You must be strong with *love*, which is stronger than death. You must be strong with the love that: "is patient and kind;... is not jealous or boastful;... is not arrogant or rude... does not insist on its own way;... is not irritable or resentful;... does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends (1 Cor 13:4-8).

You must be strong with the strength of faith, hope and charity, a charity that is aware, mature and responsible and helps us to set up the great *dialogue with man and the world* rooted in the dialogue with God himself, with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, *the dialogue of salvation*.

That dialogue continues to be what we are called to by all "the signs of the times". John XXIII and Paul VI, together with the [Second Vatican Council](#), accepted this call to dialogue. John Paul II confirms this same readiness from the first day of his pontificate. Yes, we must work for peace and reconciliation between the people and the nations of the whole world. We must try to come closer to one another. We must open the frontiers. When we are *strong with the Spirit of God*, we are also strong with faith in man, strong with faith, hope and charity which are inseparable, and ready to give witness to the cause of man before the person who really has this cause at heart. The person to whom this cause is sacred. The person who wishes to serve this cause with his best will. There is therefore no need for fear. We must open the frontiers. *There is no imperialism in the Church, only service*. There is only the death of Christ on Calvary. There is the activity of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of that death, the Holy Spirit who is always with all of us, with the whole of mankind, "until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20).

5. Again, there is in Warsaw, on Victory Square, the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where I began my pilgrim ministry in the land of Poland; and here in Krakow on the Vistula, between Wawel and Skalka, there is the tomb of "the Unknown Bishop" of whom a marvellous "relic" is preserved in the treasure house of our history.

And so, before I leave you, I wish to give one more look at Krakow, this Krakow in which every stone and every brick is clear to me. And I look once more on my Poland.

So, before going away, I beg you once again to accept the whole of the spiritual legacy which

goes by the name of "Poland", with the faith, hope and charity that Christ poured into us at our holy Baptism.

I beg you

— never lose your trust, do not be defeated, do not be discouraged;

— do not on your own *cut* yourselves off from the roots from which we had our origins.

I beg you

— have trust, and notwithstanding all your weakness, always *seek* spiritual power from him from whom countless generations of our fathers and mother have found it.

— *never detach ourselves* from him.

— *never lose your spiritual freedom*, with which "he makes a human being free".

— *Never disdain charity*, which is "the greatest of these" and which shows itself through the Cross. Without it human life has no roots and no meaning.

All this I beg of you

— recalling the powerful intercession of the Mother of God at Jasna Gora and at all her other shrines in Polish territory;

— in memory of Saint Adalbert who underwent death for Christ near the Baltic Sea;

— in memory of Saint Stanislaus who fell beneath the royal sword at Skalka.

All this I beg of you.

Amen.

© Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana