



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND

DEPARTURE CEREMONY FOR POLAND

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Fiumicino Airport, 2 June 1979

At the moment of leaving the beloved soil of Italy to go to the beloved soil of Poland, I have the deep impression that the journey is taking place, as it were, between two homelands and, as if by physical contact, serves to unite them even more in my heart. I am leaving my country of election, where the Lord's will has called me for an exceptional pastoral service, and am going to my country of origin, which I left just a few months ago: it is, therefore, a return, which will shortly be followed by *another return*, after following an itinerary which—like my preceding journey in Mexico—is, by my own choice, inspired by a religious and pastoral motivation.

It is, in fact, the recurrence of the jubilee of St Stanislaus, bishop and martyr, that guides my steps. His sacrifice for the faith, nine centuries ago, is—like the preceding and fundamental "Millennium Poloniae"—one of the most important historico-religious events of my native land, so it was decided some time ago to commemorate it with appropriate and solemn celebrations. And I who had already taken part in carrying out a vast programme of spiritual preparation for the event, could not fail to be present at this appointment with my people. I am all the more grateful for the invitation of the Polish Episcopate, headed by the Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. God willing, I will first reach Warsaw, the glorious capital, so sorely tired and now risen again, industrious and pulsating with life. I will then visit Gniezno, the city which was the cradle of the Christian faith for the Polish nation, because the sovereign Mieszko was baptized there in 996, and which is distinguished by devotion to the Patron Saint Wojciech. Then the famous Marian Sanctuary of Czestochowa; and then Krakow, which with unchanged affection I continue to call "my" city. The ancient capital of Poland, it was the episcopal see of the martyr Stanislaus, and for me close to Wadowice, the city of my youth and the field of a thirty-year apostolate. At Krakow what I would call the personal motive of this journey assumes importance, because I will meet there the Church from which I come.

But there is also an international motive, and in this connection I wish to recall the kind and respectful message that has reached me from Prof. Henryk Jablonski, President of the Council of State of the People's Republic of Poland, who, also on behalf of the Polish Government, has wished to express to me the satisfaction of the whole national community at the fact that the "son of the Polish people", called to guide the universal Church, is about to visit his homeland. This is an act which gave, and still gives me, deep pleasure. For this reason I renew my most sincere appreciation to the Authorities of the Polish State, while I confirm what I already expressed in my letter of reply: that is, my attachment to the causes of peace, coexistence and cooperation among nations; the hope that my visit will consolidate internal unity among my beloved fellow-countrymen and also serve the further development of the relations between State and Church.

It is with these sentiments and thoughts that I prepare to set off, taking with me also the good wishes of my predecessor, Paul VI. I take with me the image of all of you, Authorities and Gentlemen, who have come with such courteousness—for which I am sincerely grateful—to see me off. Above all, I take with me the bond of affection that unites me with beloved Italy and its citizens.

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