



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND

WELCOMING CEREMONY IN WARSAW

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Okecie Airport, 2 June 1979

Mr Chairman of the Council of State of the Polish People's Republic,

1. I express my sincere gratitude for the words with which you have greeted me at the beginning of my stay in Poland. I thank you for what you were so good to say with regard to the Apostolic See and myself. Through you, Mr Chairman, I express my esteem for the State Authorities and I again renew my cordial gratitude for the kind attitude towards my visit to Poland, "the beloved motherland of all Poles", my own motherland.

I desire to recall here once again the courteous letter which I received from you last March, in which you wished, in your own name and in that of the Government of the Polish People's Republic, to express satisfaction for the fact that "the son of the Polish nation called to the supreme dignity of the Church" desired to visit his motherland. I recall these words with gratitude. At the same time it is useful to repeat what I have already pointed out: that is, that my visit has been dictated by strictly religious motives. Furthermore, I earnestly hope that my present journey in Poland may serve the great cause of rapprochement and of collaboration among nations; that it may be useful for reciprocal understanding, for reconciliation, and for peace in the contemporary world. I desire finally that the fruit of this visit may be the internal unity of my fellow-countrymen and also a further favourable development of the relations between the State and the Church in my beloved motherland.

Your Eminence the Cardinal Primate of Poland,

I thank you for your words of greeting. They are particularly dear to me both in consideration of the Person who has spoken them and on account of the Church in Poland, whose feelings and thoughts they express.

I wish to give a response to your words by means of the whole of the service that it is planned for me to give in the programme for the days that Divine Providence and your cordial kindness are granting me to pass in Poland.

Beloved brothers and sisters, dear fellow-countrymen,

2. I have kissed the ground of Poland on which I grew up, the land from which, through the inscrutable design of Providence, God called me to the Chair of Peter in Rome, the land to which I am coming today as a pilgrim.

I would like therefore to address you and greet each and every one of you with the same words I used on 16 October last year to greet those present in Saint Peter's Square: Praised be Jesus Christ!

3. I greet you in the name of Christ, as I learned to greet people here in Poland,

— in Poland, my native land, to which I remain deeply attached by the roots of my life, of my heart, of my vocation;

— in Poland, this country in which, as the poet Cyprian Norwid wrote, "people gather up, through respect for heaven's gifts, every crumb that falls to the ground"; where the first greeting is an eternal confession of Christ: Praised be Jesus Christ!

— in Poland, whose thousand years of history makes it part of Europe and of contemporary humanity;

— in Poland, which throughout the course of history has been linked with the Church of Christ and the See of Rome by a special bond of spiritual unity.

4. *Beloved brothers and sisters, fellow-countrymen,*

I am coming to you as a son of this land, of this nation, and also, by the inscrutable designs of Providence, as a Successor of Saint Peter in the See of Rome.

I thank you for not having forgotten me and for not having ceased, from the day of my election, to help me with your prayers and to show me also such kindly benevolence.

I thank you for inviting me. I greet in spirit and embrace with my heart every human being living in the land of Poland.

I greet moreover all the guests who have gathered here from other countries for these days, and particularly those who represent the Polish Emigrants throughout the world.

5. What feelings arise in my heart at the music and words of the national anthem, which we have listened to a moment ago with the respect due to it!

I thank you because this Pole, coming today "from the land of Italy to the land of Poland" (Polish National Anthem), is received on the threshold of his pilgrimage in Poland with this music and these words, in which expression has always been found for the nation's unflagging will to live—"while we live" (Polish National Anthem).

I wish my stay in Poland to help to strengthen this unflagging will to live on the part of my fellow-countrymen in the land that is our common mother and homeland. May it be for the good of all the Poles, of all the Polish families, of the nation and of the State.

May my stay—I wish to repeat it once again—help the great cause of peace, friendship in relations between nations, and social justice.

© Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana