



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

MEETING WITH THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF KRAKOW

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Krakow

Friday, 8 June 1979

Dear Young Friends,

1. Allow me to begin with city *recollections*, since it is still only a short time ago that I used to meet you regularly in the many pastoral centres for the university students of Krakow. We saw each other on various occasions and I think that we understood each other well. I shall never forget our exchange of Christmas good wishes with the shared Eucharist, the Advent and Lenten spiritual exercises and our other meetings.

This year I had to spend Lent in Rome and for the first time I spoke not to *the Polish university students of Krakow* but to the Roman university students. I shall quote you some passages of what I said to them in the Basilica of Saint Peter:

"Christ is... the One who *made a radical change in the way of understanding life*. He showed that life is a passing over, not only to the limit of death, but to a new life. Thus the Cross became for us the supreme *Chair* of the truth of God and of man. We must all be pupils no matter what our age is—of this Chair. Then we will understand that the Cross is also the *cradle*, of the new man.

"Those who are its pupils look at life in this way, perceive it in this way. And they teach it in this way to others. They imprint this meaning of life on the whole of temporal reality: on morality, creativity, culture, politics, economics. It has very often been affirmed—as, for example, the followers of Epicurus sustained in ancient times, and as some followers of Marx do in our times for other reasons—that this concept of life distracts man from temporal reality and that it cancels it in a certain sense. The truth is quite different. *Only this conception of life gives full importance to all*

the problems of temporal reality. It opens the possibility of placing them fully in man's existence. And one thing is certain: this conception of life *does not permit shutting man up* in temporary things, it does not permit subordinating him completely to them. It decides his freedom.

"Giving human life this 'paschal' meaning, that is, that it is a passing over, a passing over to freedom, Jesus Christ taught with his word and even more with his own example that it is a test... *the test of thought, of the 'heart' and of the will, the test of truth and love*. In this sense, it is at the same time *the test of the Covenant* with God...

"*The concept of 'test'* is closely connected with *the concept of responsibility*. Both are addressed to our will, to our acts. Accept, dear friends, both these concepts—or rather both realities—as elements of the construction of one's own humanity. This humanity of yours is already mature and, at the same time, is still young. It is in the phase of the definitive formation of one's life project. This formation takes place particularly in the 'academic' years, in the time of higher studies...

"It is necessary to undertake this test with all responsibility. It is at the same time a personal responsibility—for my life, for its future pattern, for its value—and also a social responsibility, for justice and peace, for the moral order of one's own native environment and of the whole of society. It is a responsibility for the real common, good. A man who has such an awareness of the meaning of life does not destroy, but constructs the future. Christ teaches us this."

After the evening I spent with the youth of Rome, during which nearly all received their Easter communion, I thought to myself: *How alike students are everywhere!* Everywhere they listen to the Word of God and participate in the liturgy with the same attention. I then thought of you, of the spiritual retreats of the Polish university students of Krakow, of the similar moment of recollection, reflection and living the silence in the Church of Saint Ann, or in that of the Mother of God at Nowa Wies, or in that of the Dominicans or of the Jesuits, during like encounters.

2. I thought of you also *in Mexico*, when I met the local university students in the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Allow me to quote also some phrases from the letter that after my return from Mexico I wrote specially to *the university students of Latin America*:

"During my meeting with you I saw that you feel very deeply the evil that weighs upon the social life of the nations whose sons and daughters you are. You are troubled by the need of change, the need to build a better world, One that is more just and also more worthy of man. In this matter your desires coincide with the outlook that has become more and more marked through the teaching and apostolate of the present-day Church. The Second Vatican Council often responds to this aspiration to make life on earth more human, more worthy of man. This basically has reference to each human being and so to all human beings. It cannot lead to restrictions, exploitation, falsification or discrimination of any kind. It must bring with it the full truth concerning man and lead to full actualization of human rights. The correct actualization of this noble

inspiration beating in the heart and will of the young requires that man be seen in the whole of his human dimension. Man must not be reduced to the sphere of his merely material needs. Progress cannot be measured by economic categories alone. The spiritual dimension of the human being must be given its right place.

"Man is himself through the maturity of his spirit, his conscience and his relationship with God and neighbour.

"There will be no better world no better arrangement of social life, unless preference is first given to the values of the human spirit. Remember this well, you who are justly longing for changes bringing a better and more just society, you who rightly oppose every kind of evil, of discrimination, of violence and of torture inflicted on human beings. Remember that the order that you desire is a moral order and you will not attain it in any way, if you do not give first place to all that constitutes the strength of the human spirit—justice, love and friendship" (AAS 71 [1979] 253-254).

3. I rejoice today in meeting you again in the context of the jubilee of Saint Stanislaus in which I have the good fortune to participate. When we listen to the Gospel that the liturgy of the solemnity of Saint Stanislaus each year recalls to us, we see in our mind's eye Christ, the Good Shepherd who "lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11), who knows his own sheep and his own know him (cf. Jn 10:14), who goes after the lost sheep and, when he has found it, "he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Lk 15:5), and brings it back with joy to the fold.

All that I can say to you is summed up in the words: *Get to know Christ and make yourselves known to him*. He knows each one of you in a particular way. It is not a knowledge that arouses opposition and rebellion, a knowledge that forces one to flee in order to safeguard his own inward mystery. It is not a knowledge made up of hypotheses and reducing man to his dimensions of social utility. The knowledge of Christ is *a knowledge full of the simple truth about 'man' and, above all, full of love*. Submit yourselves to this simple and loving knowledge of the Good Shepherd. Be certain that he knows each one of you more than each one of you knows himself. He knows because he has laid down his life (cf. Jn 15:13).

Allow him to find you. A human being, a young person, at times gets lost in himself, in the world about him, and in all the network of human affairs that wrap him round. Allow Christ to find you. Let him know all about you and guide you. It is true that following someone requires also *making demands on ourselves*. That is the law of friendship. If we wish to travel together, we must pay attention to the road we are to take. If we go walking in the mountains, we must follow the signs. If we go mountain climbing, we cannot let go of the rope. We must also preserve our unity with the Divine Friend whose name is Jesus Christ. We must cooperate with him.

Many times I have spoken of this and have done so more amply and in greater detail than today. Remember, what I said before and am saying now. I said it and I am saying it from personal

experience. I have always been amazed at *the wonderful power that Christ holds over the human heart*: he holds it not for just any reason or motive, not for any kind of career or profit, but only because he loves and lays down his life for his brethren (cf. Jn 15: 13).

4. You are the future of the world, of the nation, of the Church. "Tomorrow depends on you." Accept with a sense of responsibility the simple truth contained in this song of youth and ask Christ, through his Mother, that you may be able to face it.

You must carry into the future the whole of the experience of history that is called "Poland". It is a difficult experience, perhaps one of the most difficult in the world, in Europe, and in the Church. *Do not be afraid of the toil*; be afraid only of thoughtlessness and pusillanimity. From the *difficult* experience that we call "Poland" a better future can be drawn, but only on condition that you are honourable, temperate, believing, free in spirit and strong in your convictions.

Be consistent in your faith.

Be faithful to the Mother of Fair Love. Have trust in her, as you shape your love and form your young families.

May Christ always be for you "the way, and the truth, and the life".

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