



## The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II  
TO A GROUP OF PILGRIMS ON OCCASION OF THE SIXTH CENTENARY OF THE  
«BAPTISM» OF LITHUANIA** *Saturday, 27 June 1987*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. It gives me great joy to greet you today, Lithuanian brothers and sisters who have come from various parts of the world with your pastors and led by Bishop Paulius Baltakis, to celebrate the Sixth Centenary of the "Baptism" of your beloved nation. Your presence here in Rome is an eloquent sign to the Church and to the world: a sign of your fidelity to your cherished homeland – a land all too often beset by trials and sufferings; a sign of your profound attachment to the faith which your forefathers received six centuries ago; a sign of your love for the Catholic Church and for the Successor of Peter, who is the visible source of unity for all God's people.

On this occasion the Church in Lithuania, represented here by Bishop Antanas Vaiius and a group of eight priests, gives thanks to God for the gift of the "Baptism". Baptism is a gift for which all believers are called to rejoice, not only for themselves but also for others, as Saint Paul says: "I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me". It is our unity in the Body of Christ that enables us to rejoice in the marvellous gift of salvation in Jesus Christ offered to us and to all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. You feel especially close to the Church that is in Lithuania since you are joined to her like the living branch of a tree that is rooted in the rich Lithuanian soil. With your brothers and sisters there, and under the guidance of your Pastors, you have prepared yourselves spiritually for this Jubilee celebration. And now, in communion with them—a communion of mind and heart and fervent prayer – you are celebrating with them this solemn commemoration. You have preserved your Catholic faith, that priceless treasure carried from your land of origin. And your parishes, schools, associations, cultural centres and Catholic newspapers and periodicals are concrete expressions of the vitality of your faith and of your attachment to your cultural and religious traditions. Furthermore, by preserving these traditions you have enriched the cultures of the countries where you have been received and which have become your new home.

2. Through this celebration you have chosen to give renewed emphasis to your Christian faith as the fundamental spiritual value of your people, a force which has had a decisive role in the history of the nation, a powerful influence on her cultural and moral life, as well as a source of strength and support in the dark times of her

history. For each one of you, the Six Hundredth Anniversary of the " Baptism " of Lithuania constitutes an urgent call for your own spiritual renewal. It is your task to give life now to the grace of your "Baptism". The Jubilee observance, in fact, will be fruitful to the extent that each person is converted to a more convinced life of faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You have been called to be men and women who live by the Spirit. Indeed, it is your vocation to be a nation enlivened by the Spirit, and "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience... faithfulness...". This is an appropriate time for you to renew and give new life to the beautiful Christian traditions of your people; to give rightful expression to the artistic, cultural and religious sensitivity that you have inherited. Preserve and integrate into your lives the traditional customs of family and social life, and pass them on to your children. Likewise, this Jubilee Year is a time for ever more intense spiritual solidarity with the Church in your land of origin. Continue to express your support and encouragement to your brothers and sisters living there, especially to those who suffer for reasons of religious conscience. In this way the truth of the words of Saint Paul will increasingly become a part of their spiritual experience: "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too". They look to you with confidence, knowing that they are sustained by your prayer. [*Omissis, Traduzione dal lituano*]<sup>5</sup>. I wish to extend also a special greeting to the participants in the International Colloquium of Ecclesiastical History now taking place here in Rome under the auspices of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, on the theme "The Christianization of Lithuania". As eminent historians you are bringing your scientific knowledge to bear on a very significant moment of European history, the emergence of the Lithuanians as a Christian people in spiritual contact and harmony with the other great nations of Europe. I wish you well in your professional pursuits, and may the God of peace and love be with you always.

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