



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
TO NORWAY, ICELAND, FINLAND,
DENMARK AND SWEDEN

WELCOME CEREMONY IN ICELAND

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Airport of Reykjavik-Keflavik
Saturday, 3 June 1989

Mr Prime Minister and Members of the Government,
Dear Bishop Jolson,
Dear Children,
Beloved People of Iceland,

1. It is with great joy and satisfaction that I set foot upon the soil of Iceland and greet her people. As I drew near to your country and marvelled at her magnificent landscapes and mountain peaks, I gave thanks to Almighty God for this moment and for the precious time that we will spend together. May God, who is the Lord of all creation and the Father of all nations, bless Iceland with peace and prosperity. May he continue to inspire you and your children to treasure all that is beautiful, all that is noble and all that is true.

For many centuries, Iceland has shared her natural beauty and her ancient traditions of generosity and honour with visitors who have come to this island from afar. *I am deeply grateful to Her Excellency the President of the Republic, to you, Mr Prime Minister, and to the members of the Government* for the kind invitation and the warm welcome which have been given to this most recent visitor to your land. My visit to Iceland is an expression of my own personal interest and deep esteem for your country and for her place within the family of nations. Indeed, because of the rich spiritual heritage reflected in the treasure of poetry and saga which your ancestors bequeathed to you, Iceland has much to say to a world that yearns to be inspired by the truth and to create a society of justice, peace and universal harmony.

2. I have come to Iceland, as you know, in fulfilment of my ministry as the Bishop of Rome. Within the Catholic Church, I have been entrusted with the task of building up the communion of the local Churches in the unity of faith, hope and love. This task has carried me to countries and peoples across the world, as I seek to be of service to my brothers and sisters in the faith, and to bear witness to Jesus Christ, “the Son of the living God” (*Matth. 16, 16*). In this pastoral visit to the Church in Iceland, *I look forward to praying with Bishop Jolson, the priests and religious of the Diocese of Reykjavik, and the entire Catholic community.* In our celebration of the Church’s liturgy, we shall praise God for the gift of faith and for the many blessings which he has bestowed upon us.

In addition, my pastoral visit seeks to encourage the good relations which have developed between Iceland’s Catholics and the members of *other ecclesial communities*. Despite the tragic divisions which have long separated Christians, all of us must strive, in fidelity to the Lord’s will, to be instruments of his reconciliation, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Cfr. *Eph. 4, 3*). *Here in Iceland, the name of Christ has been preached for a thousand years.* The message of the Gospel has formed the heart and the conscience of your people throughout her history. At Thingvellir where Christ’s Church first took root in Iceland, I will join in prayer with our brothers and sisters from the Lutheran Church and other ecclesial communities. In thanking God for all that we have received, we shall pray for the peace of Iceland and the spiritual health of all her people.

3. Today, in Iceland and throughout the world, *men and women of good will* are increasingly aware of the *need for enduring peace* among nations and peoples. They understand that this peace can only be the fruit of a *just economic and social order*. In the face of new forms of violence and oppression, they continue to long for the day when all nations will be secure in their freedom, and all men and women will enjoy their just share of the world’s goods. In their concern for the future of the world in which their children will live, they have come to recognize the threat of a materialism that would sacrifice the environment itself to the pursuit of a sterile material progress.

Iceland and her people have much to say to a world that increasingly longs for stability, harmony and peace, yet senses its own fragile condition and the fateful choices that it must even now begin to make. The *thousand-year history* of your country has given you a vision that can still inspire a world that often fears to lose its very soul. Dear friends: I encourage you to stand firm and hold fast to the traditions you have received (Cfr. *2Thess. 2, 15*). *Remain faithful to the noble values that have shaped your Christian history and your life as a people.* Those values are Iceland’s greatest treasure, and they offer the surest hope for your future and the future of our world. They have the power to inspire and sustain you as you seek to build what my predecessor Pope Paul VI called “the civilization of love”: a society based on a genuine solidarity, an openness to the needs of all, and a respect for the weak and those least able to defend themselves.

4. Dear people of Iceland: the message I proclaim among every people I visit is the same. It is the

message of the grace and peace which come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Cfr. *Rom.* 1, 7). That message has inspired your ancestors and guided your growth as a people down through the centuries. May it continue to yield a rich harvest in your lives, in your homes and in the hearts of your children. May it inspire you to be faithful to the best of Iceland's noble heritage, and guide you in your every contribution to a world that longs to know the truth, the truth that alone can set us free (Cfr. *Io.* 8, 32).

God bless Iceland! God bless you all!

© Copyright 1989 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana