



The Holy See

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

**MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF FINLAND,
MR MAUNO KOIVISTO**

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II*

Presidential Palace, Helsinki
Sunday, 4 June 1989

Mr President,
Distinguished Members of Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. As I begin my pastoral visit to Finland, I wish to express my gratitude for this meeting. *In greeting you, President Koivisto, and the members of the Government, I wish to greet all the people of Finland* with warmth and affection. I have looked forward to this visit, for I am very conscious of the bonds which have long existed between your nation and the Holy See. My first wish for Finland and her people is expressed simply in these words of the Psalmist: "May... peace be within your walls, and security within your towers!" (Ps. 122, 7).

In coming to Finland, I have come to a people well known for their *independence and dedication to the cause of international peace*. Your commitment to peace and the self-determination of peoples is strong, for it has long been tested in the crucible of suffering. The struggle to maintain Finland's independence has left its mark not only in the memories of hardships once endured for the sake of freedom, but also in the determination and tenacity with which you have built up a modern and prosperous society in the wake of devastation and war. The strength of Finland does not derive from her material prosperity, but from a firm and enduring confidence in the ideals which have guided you through the events of your history.

It is that *spiritual wealth* which I would recall today. In a world which yearns to free itself from the spectre of war and long-enduring hostility between nations, Finland has an experience to share. Your struggles for independence and self-determination in this century have helped to forge your character as a people. Fidelity to the ideals which guided those struggles is the key not only to Finland's continuing growth as a people, but also to *her future contributions to the community of the nations*.

2. As you know, Mr President, *the Holy See was among the first* within the international community *to recognize the independence of Finland*. Later, at the height of the Second World War, the Holy See and the Republic of Finland came to establish official diplomatic relations. The intervening years have further consolidated our good relations and our effective collaboration in the pursuit of an international order more solidly based upon justice, peace and an authentic development of peoples. It is my deep hope, Mr President, that these efforts may further promote the good of all individuals, of all nations and peoples.

The presence of the *Holy See within the international community* points to the *fundamental importance of the spiritual values* which inspire and undergird all genuine efforts to advance the cause of peace and respect for human dignity. In addition to her diplomatic efforts, *Finland bears witness to those same values* in a notable way through her contributions to the world of the arts and letters, and to the development of the sciences. This active and valuable presence has enlarged your appreciation of the human spirit, and has thus served to promote greater understanding among peoples. In this context, I am pleased to recall the close relationship which exists between the *Finnish Institute in Rome* and the Vatican. I trust that such cooperation will continue to result in fruitful exchanges and to advance both our knowledge of the past as well as our love for the treasures of art which people of every age have produced.

3. *My pastoral visit is motivated by my desire, as Bishop of Rome, to strengthen the bonds of ecclesial communion which unite Finland's Catholics with the Apostolic See*. My ministry commits me to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to exercise a pastoral concern for all the Churches (Cfr. *2Cor. 11, 28*). My desire is to be instrumental in deepening the faith of Finland's Catholics, that they may grow in their knowledge of the hope to which Christ has called them, the riches of his glorious inheritance and the immeasurable greatness of his power in those who believe (Cfr. *Eph. 1, 18-19*).

Tomorrow, *in the Cathedral of Turku*, I will join in an *ecumenical service of prayer* for the unity of all Christians. This too is a *significant part of my pilgrimage to Finland*. The ecumenical movement, which seeks to overcome all divisions among those who believe in Christ, is truly a sign of God's grace at work in our time. I am grateful to my fellow Christians, my brothers and sisters in the Lord, for the kind invitation to pray with them at the tomb of Saint Henrik. I would hope that the fellowship that has grown between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches here may be further strengthened by this pastoral visit.

As a friend of Finland, I have come to all her people, to believers and to non-believers alike. The message which I bring, the Gospel which I have been charged to preach, is intended to touch the hearts of all men and women. It has the power to awaken and enliven all that is noble in the human spirit, and to point the way to a world of authentic peace and true progress. For centuries, it has formed the vision and the conscience of the Finnish people. In our own days, it can offer a sure guide to those who seek the truth and long to build a society characterized by justice, harmony and universal solidarity.

4. Mr President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen: on the occasion of this first visit of a Bishop of Rome to Finland. I make it my prayer that the good relations existing between your country and the Holy See will continue to grow in the years ahead. May your efforts to build a more humane society and to provide for the well-being of all your people be ever rooted in the lofty moral and social principles that are part of Finland's most precious heritage.

May Almighty God, the author of peace and the source of all good, bless Finland and all her people with his enduring peace.

Jumala siunatkoon Suomea. Jumala siunatkoon teitä kaikkia.

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