



# The Holy See

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

## FAREWELL CEREMONY FROM SWEDEN

### ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Airport of Linköping*  
*Sunday, 10 June 1989*

*Mr Prime Minister,*  
*Dear People of Sweden,*  
*Dear Friends,*

1. As I prepare to board the plane that will take me back to Rome, I wish to *express my gratitude* to each and every one of you *for the warm welcome and generous hospitality* which you have shown me. In these three days, I have seen something of the magnificent natural beauty with which God has blessed Sweden. But more importantly, I have been impressed by a people who are proud of their country, steadfast in their commitment to build a better world for their children, and open-hearted in their welcome to those who come from afar. I will treasure these impressions, and I encourage you to persevere in the great religious traditions and values which are at the source of your national identity.

My visit to Sweden concludes my pastoral journey to the Nordic Countries. I came as the Successor of Saint Peter to proclaim the saving truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God (Cfr. *Matth.* 16, 16). I came as a brother in Christ to bear witness to the truth which unites all of us Christians in spite of our divisions.

In taking my leave, I wish to express *my deep thanks to His Majesty the King*, to the Prime Minister, and to the Ambassador of Sweden to the Holy See. Your efforts on my behalf and your concern for the success of my visit have exemplified the good will of the Swedish people. I would

also thank *the Landshövding*, together with the representatives of the municipal bodies and all who have contributed to the success of this pilgrimage. God bless you all, and may your dedicated work bear rich fruit for the future of Sweden and her people.

2. Before I leave Sweden, I will *bless the first stone of the new Catholic church which is to be built here in Linköping*. As a foundation stone, it symbolizes the solidity and growth of the Catholic community – made up of living stones – which is called to be built up into a spiritual house founded on Christ himself (Cfr. *1Petr.* 2, 5). It serves as an encouragement to all of Sweden's Catholics to hold fast to the faith which they have received and to pass it on to the next generation; it is a sign of hope to all who long to know Christ as the sure foundation which gives meaning to the whole of life. Like Saint Paul, who desired to forget what lay behind and to strain forward to what lay ahead (*Phil.* 3, 13), may this community persevere in its efforts to build up Christ's Church in faith, hope and love. *To Bishop Brandenburg and Bishop Kenney, I express my gratitude for their zeal on behalf of the Gospel and the spiritual life of the people entrusted to their pastoral care.*

In this stone, I also see symbolized the strength and the promise of the *Church's young people*. At Vadstena, I was filled with confidence in the future as I saw so many young hearts alive with the love of Christ. To you, the Catholic youth of Sweden and of all the Nordic Countries, I make a fervent appeal: *Make Christ Jesus the foundation of your lives* and the source of your joy. The future of the Church in the north of Europe is already in your hands. Do not be afraid of the effort, sacrifice and discipline that are necessary in order to love Christ with all your heart. Do not hesitate to spend your energies for the service of others, especially of those in need and those less fortunate than yourselves.

3. This stone is very precious for another reason, for it comes from the medieval Cathedral of Linköping, and has been presented to the Catholic community by *Bishop Lönnebo and the entire Lutheran Diocese of Linköping*. This noble gesture recalls our common heritage, and impels us towards an ever closer unity in Christ. It stands as a sign of great hope for all God's people. In spite of our historical divisions, we are sincerely striving to respond to God's grace and to build up together what once was torn apart. I count it a great blessing that yesterday I was able to meet and pray with the leaders of other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities in Uppsala. May this stone always remind us that Christ alone is the foundation of our unity and the perfecter of our faith (Cfr. *Hebr.* 12, 2). He is that "cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (*Eph.* 2, 20-21).

To *Archbishop Werkström and Bishop Lönnebo*, I renew my thanks for all the assistance I have received from the Swedish Church, and for your dedicated *witness of ecumenical openness and cooperation*. My gratitude extends as well to the representatives of the various Free Churches, for their presence and participation at these events. I would also like to say a word of thanks to the *Cathedral Choir of Linköping* for their music, which has helped us to lift up our hearts to the Lord in prayer.

4. Dear people of Sweden: I thank you once again, from my heart, for your kindness to me and your openness to the Gospel of Christ which I preach. That Gospel has been heard in Sweden for over a thousand years, and it has shaped the noblest aspirations of your society. Even now, it continues to be reflected in the lives and the faith of so many Swedes. May it continue to challenge you as individuals and shape your life as a people that recognizes and honours God as the Father of humanity and that works to build a world of true peace and universal solidarity, based on the brotherhood of all God's children.

Gud välsigna Sverige. Gud välsigna er alla.

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