



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE PEOPLE OF THE NORDIC COUNTRIES OF EUROPE

Wednesday, 31 May 1989

My dear Friends,

As the time for my pastoral visit to the Nordic countries approaches, and as I intensify my preparations for this important moment, I wish to send to all of you this message of heartfelt greetings. I am looking forward very much to this visit, which is being made at the gracious invitation of the respective Heads of State and Governments, of the Lutheran Church in each country, and in particular of the small but beloved Catholic communities in your midst.

My journey is meant above all to be a pilgrimage of faith to the Christian people of your lands. I wish to honour your Christian heritage, the great saints of the past, the men and women who fashioned your history, not least through the strength of their fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In union with all those who will join me in prayer I wish, on your soil, to give thanks to God for the life and achievements of the Nordic peoples, past and present. It is also my fervent hope that the presence of the Bishop of Rome will serve to further promote the ecumenical movement which is drawing Christ's followers out of longstanding rivalry into thoughtful and sincere dialogue, and into collaboration on issues of mutual concern.

Each of your countries has attained a high degree of economic and social development. You are deeply concerned that the same progress should be extended to other parts of the world, especially to the developing countries. For this generosity and expression of brotherhood, the international community is indebted to you. The Catholic Church, for her part, has made the integral development of peoples a major objective for her service throughout the world. In the fulfilment of my office I have endeavoured to apply the Church's social teaching to the pressing problems now facing humanity. I am convinced that the way forward for the human family is closely linked to the growing worldwide awareness of the central importance of the individual

person and his or her basic human rights. Not just material well-being needs to be fostered and supported, but the interior freedom of the spirit which is at the very heart of the personal being. In each of your countries therefore I hope to pay tribute to what has already been achieved in this direction, and to offer some reflections on our common responsibility for the further advancement of peace, justice, freedom and solidarity in human affairs.

I thank all those who are preparing for my visit, especially those concerned with the spiritual preparation being made, so that our meetings may prove to be truly a dialogue of the heart. I commend my visit to Almighty God's inspiration and loving protection.

To Norway I say: *Gud velsigne dere alle.*

To Iceland: *Gud blessi ykkur oll.*

To Finland: *Jumala siunatkoon teita kaikkia.*

To Denmark: *Gud velsigne jere alle.*

To Sweden: *Gud valsigna er alla.*

God bless you all.

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