



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND AND HUNGARY

WELCOMING CEREMONY IN HUNGARY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Ferihegy International Airport of Budapest

Friday, 16 August 1991

1. My thought turns especially to the Catholics who live in this Country and who contribute with generous commitment to the common welfare. My greeting then expands to embrace with lively affection all the sons and daughters of the Hungarian nation, those residing in the homeland and those who have come from beyond her borders, especially those who live in neighbouring countries.

A few minutes ago, when I kissed the ground of your Country, I wished to express that which fills my heart at this moment: profound esteem for your Country, deep joy at being in your midst and a heartfelt desire to stand beside you on the journey which Hungary is making towards a better future. I know this Land, the beauty and richness of her vast plains, the generous spirit of her proud people and the heritage of culture and art which enriches her history.

2. My coming among you wishes to be an expression of these sentiments. I know well that you feel the joy of being able anew to receive your friends freely - all your friends, from wherever they come - and I think you consider me one of them. I recall that in August 1989 the invitation addressed to me to visit your Country was interpreted as one of the first signs of the new climate of freedom which was becoming more evident. Three years later, I am happy to be here in order to congratulate you on the steps you have already taken in this new direction, even though the experiences you have had in the meantime have shown you that freedom is never exempt from risks, but rather involves a price of its own which can also at times be very high. You are now fully aware that the new climate of freedom does not by itself resolve all the problems of your life.

In the last century one of your poets wrote that "Heaven gives each Country a treasure" and

added that the treasure of your own Country is "a sacred sorrow" (J. Eötvös, 1836). How many sufferings have marked your land! How many armies have spread their ranks in this plain, before the fortress of Buda! How many buildings set to the torch have reddened this horizon, while blood and tears watered your fields! This ancient sorrow is sacred because it has not remained a sterile sadness. Your ancestors used to repeat a phrase which has become traditional: "Long live the Hungarian, the walls of Buda are still standing" (K. Kisfaludy, 1824). This serene certainty was nourished by the faith of your first saintly King who, in a moment of sorrow, was able to exclaim courageously: "If God is with me who can be against me?" This is the reason why your indomitable race has been able to resume, after every great national calamity, *the rebuilding of the Country*.

Indeed, your ancestors did not limit themselves to restoring what had been destroyed but always wished to build *something new*, more in keeping with new possibilities and new demands.

I can share your traditions and your present harmonious effort to build a more happy and humane future because I am a son of the Polish Nation, which has so much in common with Hungarian history, and I too come from this region of Europe now on the threshold of a new era in which it hopes to be able to contribute to the formation of a peaceful community of Nations united among themselves.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters: the great war and the decades which followed it devastated your Country. Now, however, you are in a position to build a new world on the ruins of the one which has passed away, by following the example of your forebears who were always able to keep hope alive and after every national disaster had the courage and the strength to start again from the beginning in order to renew their lives.

You thus wish to lift up the fortunes of your Country, but you do not intend to return to past models which, albeit glorious, are now obsolete. You consider it your task *to build a new house*, in which future generations can develop in prosperity. You are endeavouring to carry out this task with diligence and at no small cost. And so, my Brothers and Sisters, I have come among you to help you in this work with my words and with prayer.

Men and women of Hungary! I speak to you as one who considers himself your compatriot, sharing in your destiny with you. The Pope shares your joys and your sufferings, your plans and your efforts, aimed at building a better future. He feels close to you. His words come from the "Good News" of Christ, from the faith of the Church, which knows well "the joys and hopes and the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

4. Many times in the course of history you have been forced to combat foreign powers in order to defend your national independence. Hungarian history has known bitter periods of foreign

invasions and courageous wars of independence, even when these ended tragically. Now your Country has gained its own sovereignty and you can build national life independently. Other enemies, however, are now appearing on the horizon, as well as other difficulties to overcome and other illusions to combat: they are the conflicts within your society, the self-centred interests of individuals and groups which set some people against others. Your history teaches you that all this can compromise your future and destroy your efforts to attain more just and humane social conditions.

This appeal to unity, justice and peace is not simply the result of political or economic negotiations in which useful compromises can be reached. Justice and peace, these indispensable conditions for the building of a truly human society, are only constructed on *those ultimate and eternal moral values on which every human life is based*.

The purpose of my Visit to your Country is twofold: I have come in order to confirm the faith of my brothers and sisters belonging to the Church and I have come in order to offer all Hungarians the Christian vision of the world: "For it is the human person that is to be saved, and human society to be restored" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 3). I have come in order to take note of your commitment to rebuilding your Country, to share your joys and your concerns and to offer to all the immense strength of religious faith.

This religious orientation is what I propose as the indispensable and effective basis of the rebirth of your Country, and I propose it in the words of the Council "not just to the Church's own daughters and sons and all who call on the name of Christ, but to people everywhere" (*Ibid.*, 2). Indeed, how could we know our true good, if not by hearing Him who made us and knows better than ourselves the things that we need. How can we welcome true good, the common good, even at the expense of petty selfish interests of the moment, if not by worshipping Him who created us in his image and likeness, and bids us make this divine image shine forth ever more perfectly?

5. We know well, however, how fragile is our ability to accept the truth which sets us free and makes us capable of practicing the justice demanded by our conscience. By our efforts alone we can do nothing to enable us to enter into peace with God. For this reason I have also come to pray together with you. Our common prayer intends to give voice to the most sacred desires of our heart.