



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO AUSTRIA (JUNE 19-21, 1998)

***SPEECH OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
ON ARRIVAL AT SALZBURG AIRPORT***

Friday, 19 June 1998

Mr President,

1. I joyfully set foot once again on Austrian soil, and I warmly greet *all the public authorities* who honour me with their presence. At the same time, I greet *all the citizens* of this beautiful land to which I am visiting for the third time as Bishop of Rome.

Mr President, I am deeply grateful to you for your cordial greeting. With sentiments of fraternal esteem, I address the *Bishops of this country*, thanking them for having invited me once again to visit the Republic of Austria.

Pax! Pax vobis! I greet you with the wish of the Risen One: *peace be with you*. Peace to your country! Peace to the Church in Austria! Peace to the communities and parishes, peace to the hearts of men and women! *Peace be with you all!*

2. True peace comes from the heart. "You are in the centre of the continent, like a strong heart", states your federal anthem. In past years, this *land in the heart of Europe* has joined the community of those who have set out on the way which has the unification of the continent as its goal. To build the new Europe, many hands and especially many hearts are needed that beat not only for profit and money, but for the love of God and man. My hope is that the heart of Europe will remain strong and healthy. Precisely for this reason, I pray that the thoughts and actions of all Austrian citizens will be inspired by a firm will to respect without reservation the dignity of each person and to welcome life in all its forms and phases. In fact, among the treasures of the Christian heritage it was especially *the concept of man* which had a decisive effect on European culture.

An accurate ruler is necessary for properly drawing the blueprints of a house. Those who do not know the measurements fall short of the goal. The architects of the European house have at their disposal the image of man which Christianity has impressed upon the continent's ancient culture, laying the foundations for the heights of creativity and achievement which are so much admired. Thus *the concept of man, created in the image and likeness of God*, is not a museum piece, but represents the keystone of contemporary Europe, in which the many building stones of various cultures, peoples and religions can be held together for the construction of the new building. Without this standard, the *European house under construction* is in danger of collapse and cannot last.

3. With these sentiments, I extend my gaze beyond this country's borders to the *whole of Europe*, to all the nations on our continent with their history, from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. Austria, in particular, has shared in Europe's fortunes, exercising a decisive influence. It shows in an exemplary way how many ethnic groups in a limited space can live together in fruitful tension, working creatively to build *unity in diversity*. In the national territory today, small in comparison to other countries, the characteristics of Celts and Romans, Germans, Hungarians and Slavs have put down roots, and these characteristics are still alive in the population. Thus Austria is becoming the *mirror and model of a united Europe* which does not want to marginalize anyone, but to make room for all.

4. *Veni, Creator Spiritus!* Come, Creator Spirit!

This prayer will echo as a refrain over the next few days that I will spend in your beloved country. *For the next three days, in fact, I will belong to Austria!*

"Come Creator Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your love!". With this prayer I would like to express my deep gratitude to you, Mr President, and to you, dear Brothers in the Episcopate. As I look forward with pleasure to living our communion in faith and celebration, I again greet the beloved inhabitants of this land: *Peace be with you!*