



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO POLISH PILGRIMS ON THE 22ND ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ELECTION AS POPE

Monday, 16 October 2000

1. *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor 1: 2). With these words of St Paul I cordially greet all those present at today's audience in the Vatican.

Dear friends, you have come as pilgrims to the Eternal City to participate in the Jubilee of Families during the Great Jubilee of Divine Redemption. I am delighted with your presence, especially as I look at your children - the youngest participants in this meeting. I cordially greet you all, both individuals and whole families. I extend a welcome first to the priests involved in family ministry, to Bishop Stanislaw Stefanek, President of the Council for the Family, to all those involved in this pastoral work in Poland: priests, men and women religious and laity. I greet the members of the Association of Catholic Families and the listeners to Radio Maria, the members of the Association of Catholic Jurists and also the professors of Poznan who are present here, as well as the readers of *Przewodnik Katolicki* also from Poznan. I greet the representatives of the Institute of Lomianki. I greet the representatives of the Order of the Knights of Malta and I take this occasion to extend a special word of thanks to them for their service as Good Samaritans to mankind and for their generous charitable activity, which is also well known in Poland. I extend a welcome to the numerous parish groups that have already been mentioned and to the pilgrims who have come here individually.

2. Today, as I already said, we meet during the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. You came to Rome to renew yourselves interiorly and to increase your spiritual strength. You have crossed the threshold of the Holy Door, symbol of the passage from sin to grace. Jesus very clearly said of himself: "I am the door" (*Jn* 10: 7). This means that he is the only and definitive way that leads to the Father. Only in him, in the Son of God, lies our salvation. Christ became man, suffered death on the wood of the cross and rose again to show man his authentic greatness, to restore full dignity to his humanity and the meaning of his existence in the world. What value every man must have in the eyes of the creator, if he gave "his only Son" so that man "should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn* 3: 16). We are filled with deep wonder before this enormous dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God.

What great value must every human life, every human being, even those not yet born but already alive in their mother's womb, have in the eyes of the Creator.

3. You are taking part in the Jubilee of Families, which can be called the great feast of the Church in honour of the family. You came here to say "yes" to love, to a noble, chaste love, to a love that gives life, to a responsible love. You came to show that for you the family and the life that is born, grows and finds shelter in it is a most precious value.

On this occasion I wish to express my appreciation to all who are actively working to build up the "culture of life" and who, sensing this great responsibility before God, their conscience and their nation, defend human life and the dignity of marriage and the family. To all of them and to those here, I say: be courageous! This is a great mission, a great mandate entrusted to you by divine Providence. I sincerely thank you for this attitude and for all that you are doing. May your reward be Christ himself. He said to the Apostles: "No longer do I call you servants, ... but I have called you friends, for you do what I command you" (cf. *Jn* 15: 14-15). Today I say the same to you.

I hope that every family, all the families of Poland and the world may increasingly discover the greatness and holiness of their vocation: to be faithful guardians of "fair love" and of every life conceived; to know how to defend in our time the precious patrimony of the faith and to transmit it to future generations.

4. My dear friends, I thank you for this meeting. I thank my compatriots in our homeland and throughout the world for the prayer that accompanies me in my Pontificate. I feel its strength and its fruits. It is a precious gift for me and a spiritual support. I thank you for your attachment to the Pope, to the Church and to your pastors. May it bear fruit in the Christian attitude you show in personal, family and social life.

I entrust all my compatriots in Poland and the world to the protection of Our Blessed Mother and cordially bless them.

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