



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II FOR THE OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION OF UKRAINIAN-POLISH RECONCILIATION

To Cardinals Józef Glemp, Archbishop of Warsaw and Primate of Poland

Marian Jaworski, Archbishop of Lviv for Latins

Lubomyr Husar, Major Archbishop of Lviv for Ukrainians

*Dear Citizens who belong to the Brother Peoples of Ukraine and of Poland,*¹ I have learned that the Ukrainian-Polish Reconciliation is to be officially commemorated on 11 July, on the 60th anniversary of the tragic events in Volhynia, of which you, the children of two nations both very dear to me, still have vivid memories today. In the tumult of the Second World War when the need for solidarity and reciprocal help would have been particularly urgent, the dark action of evil poisoned hearts, and weapons caused innocent blood to flow. Today, 60 years after those painful events, the majority of Poles and Ukrainians are feeling more and more acutely the need for a deep examination of conscience. They are aware of the need for a reconciliation that will enable them to look at the present and the future with new eyes. This providential interior disposition prompts me to thank the Lord, as I join in spirit those who are remembering in prayer the victims of that violent action. The new millennium, which has just begun, demands that Ukrainians and Poles rid themselves of their sorrowful memories and, seeing past events in a new perspective, look at one another with reconciled eyes, striving to build a better future for one and all. Just as God forgave us in Christ, so believers must be able to forgive one another the offences received and ask pardon for their own failings in order to help prepare a world that respects life and justice in concord and peace. Christians, moreover, knowing that "God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Cor 5: 21), are called to recognize the mistakes of the past so that they may alert us to the compromises of the present and open the soul to an authentic and lasting conversion.² During the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, in a solemn context and with a clear awareness of all that occurred in times past, the Church asked forgiveness publicly for the sins of her children and at the same time pardoned those who had offended her in various ways. Thus, she intended to purify the memory of sorrowful events from all sentiments of bitterness and revenge, to start afresh, heartened and confident, in her work of building the civilization of love. It is this very attitude that she proposes to civil society, urging everyone to be sincerely reconciled and conscious that there is no justice without forgiveness and that collaboration without reciprocal openness would be brittle. This is particularly urgent when one realizes how necessary it is to teach the young generations not to face the future conditioned by a history of suspicion, preconceptions and violence, but in a spirit of reconciled remembrance. Poland and Ukraine, lands that became

acquainted with the proclamation of the Gospel hundreds of years ago and so many of whose children have given countless testimonies of holiness, want to strengthen their friendly relations at the beginning of this new millennium, shedding past grievances and opening themselves to fraternal relations, enlightened by Christ's love.³ I am delighted that the Christian communities of Ukraine and Poland are promoting this commemoration to help heal the wounds of the past, and I encourage these two brother peoples to persevere unremittingly in their search for collaboration and peace. As I offer my cordial greetings to the entire Episcopate, the Clergy and the faithful of both these nations, I address a respectful thought to the Presidents and their respective civil Authorities, and through them, to the Polish and Ukrainian peoples who are ever present in my heart and in my prayers, in the hope that they will advance constantly in concord and peace. I accompany these hopes with a special Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly impart to all who will be joining in the celebrations planned. *From the Vatican, 7 July 2003* **JOHN PAUL II**