



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS
OF THE JOHN PAUL II FOUNDATION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE POPE'S NAME-DAY***

Tuesday, 4 November 2003

I cordially welcome all of you here present and thank the dear Archbishops for their kind words. I greet the pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Danzig who, according to the tradition started some years ago, join me on the feast day of my Patron Saint, St Charles Borromeo. I also greet the pilgrims of the Dioceses of Gniezno and of Tarnów, together with their Bishops. Thank you very much for coming. My heartfelt appreciation goes to all of the artists who have prepared this fine programme.

In a particular way, I would like to greet the members and friends of the John Paul II Foundation who have organized this festive evening. I am grateful because this has become the occasion to meet a large group of my fellow countrymen: residents of Rome and those who have come from various parts of the world. It has been a long time since we have had a get-together of this sort. In a certain sense, this is inscribed in the purpose that was given to the Foundation 20 years ago. Indeed, the original Statutes state that the Foundation's religious, cultural, scientific, pastoral and charitable work is placed at the service of the Polish people who live in Poland and those who have emigrated, in order to facilitate the consolidation of the traditional ties that exist between Poland and the Holy See, and to help spread the patrimony of Polish Christian culture and in-depth study of Church doctrine.

Today the Foundation's scope and work have been extended and have taken on an international character. Nevertheless, we cannot forget the Polish roots; it is good that today they were remembered in this poetic way.

Friends of the Foundation in the United States and Indonesia are present today. I cordially greet

them and express my gratitude to them for their willing and generous participation in this work. I thank you not only for your material support for the Foundation but also for your active initiatives of a religious and cultural nature, which become opportunities for evangelization and for spreading a culture permeated by the Christian spirit. God bless you!

Then I greet the Foundation's friends who have come from France. I know how much good is done thanks to your dedication, your witness of faith and affection for the Successor of Peter. I thank you for the help you give to the Foundation and to all those who benefit from your initiatives. I pray that God may sustain you with his grace and blessing.

I cordially greet the guests who have come from Rome and Italy. I gratefully affirm that in this country the Foundation is able to develop its activity in an atmosphere of benevolent support. I express my particular thanks to Cardinal Camillo Ruini and to the Italian Bishops' Conference for the material contribution to the work of educating the young people from the former Eastern Bloc countries who are studying in Lublin, Warsaw and Krakow. It is a meaningful expression of the solidarity of the Church in Italy with those Churches that continue to heal the wounds of the past. May the good Lord reward your kindness.

Today, together with you, I give thanks to God for every good that, in the span of 22 years, has been achieved through initiatives taken by the Foundation. Thanks to the generous effort of numerous persons, thousands of pilgrims who come to Rome from various parts of the world have been able to find spiritual assistance and much needed help of all sorts. I was personally able to encounter many of them, and their witnesses of faith and prayer always filled me with joy. The numerous proofs of spiritual union with the Successor of Peter were sources of encouragement and strength for me. I trust that the Foundation will continue to assist all those who come to the Eternal City to strengthen their faith in Christ and in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

The Foundation is committed to preserving the documents relating to this Pontificate and to spreading the teachings of the Church's Magisterium. It is necessary that this patrimony of good, born in this period of history by divine grace, remain for the future generations. In this last quarter of a century numerous and significant events have taken place in the Church and the world which highlight the fact that our human actions, although clumsy, are registered in the plans of divine good and come to fruition, thanks to God's grace. Such events cannot be forgotten. May their memory form the Christian identity of future generations and be a reason to give thanks to God for his goodness.

We cannot fail to mention the Foundation's success in disseminating Christian culture. Thanks to the efforts of men and women of science and the material assistance provided by the Foundation, many precious publications have appeared which help to bring the people of today closer to the secrets of history, and the development of philosophy and theology. The most valuable work, however, is that which leaves an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of youth. Thanks to the

Foundation, hundreds of students from former Communist countries have been able to obtain scholarships and to complete their studies in the various disciplines in Poland. They return to their countries of origin to serve there, with their knowledge and witness of faith, those who for years were deprived of access to science and culture broadly understood, and to the message of the Gospel. I have sometimes had the opportunity to meet these young people and I always had the impression that they are a treasure of which we can be proud.

Twenty-two years have passed since 16 October 1981, the day on which I signed the Foundation's original Statutes. That document, which defined both the ends and means of the Foundation, has assured over the span of years the grounds on which to develop the numerous initiatives of a religious, cultural and pastoral nature, which have produced blessed fruits. The experience that has been acquired during these 20 years, however, has shown the need to adapt the Statutes of the Foundation to meet today's challenges. It is for this reason that the Council of the Foundation has presented a project to introduce some changes into the Statutes which I - confirming the validity of the foundational decree - have approved this past 16 October, precisely 22 years after the institution of the Foundation. On this solemn occasion I would like to consign the new Decree to the President of the Council, Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły, on the basis of which the renewed Statutes of the Foundation come into force today. May this be a more effective aid in achieving the goals which have guided the founders from the beginning of this Pontificate.

I thank you all once again for your good will. I ask you to pray and persevere in doing good. I cordially bless you all, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.