



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

HOMILY AT MASS

Tuesday, 15 June 1999, Kraków

1. *Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur.*

Te aeternum Patrem, omnis terra veneratur.

“We praise you, O God, we acclaim you as the Lord
Everlasting Father, all the world bows down before you.”

How great is the gift of Divine Providence which today enables me, together with the Church in Kraków, to join in this hymn which, for centuries, heaven and earth have raised to the glory of their Creator, Lord and Father!

*Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur Ecclesia,
Patrem immensae maiestatis;*

“To the ends of the earth your holy Church proclaims her faith in you:
Father, whose majesty is boundless.”

It is a great gift that, while the Church throughout the world gives thanks to God for the two thousand years of her existence, at the same time the Church here in Kraków gives thanks for its own millennium! How can we not intone the solemn *Te Deum*, which today takes on a particular significance; it expresses the gratitude of entire generations of the city's inhabitants for everything that the community of the faithful has contributed to the life of the Kraków region. How can we not give thanks for that breath of the Spirit of Christ which from the Upper Room spread throughout the world and reached the banks of the Vistula, and continually renews the face of the earth - of this land of Kraków! We praise you, O God!

I extend a heartfelt greeting to all the people of the city. I greet Cardinal Franciszek, Auxiliary Bishops Jan and Kazimierz, as well as the emeritus Bishops, Stanislaw and Albin. I warmly embrace all the priests, consecrated men and women, students of the Major Seminary, and lay catechists. I also extend greetings to the provincial and city authorities. I cordially greet you, brothers and sisters, who have come together in Blonia Krakowskie, to join the Pope in celebrating this Eucharist for the Millennium. I greet all those who are with us through radio and television. I address words of special gratitude to the sick. The offering of your suffering, which you present in union with Christ every day for all mankind, for the Church and for the Pope, is of great value in God's eyes. On the threshold of the third Millennium, may it be the crowning of our praise and our petition for forgiveness and of our pleas.

*2. Te gloriosus Apostolorum chorus
te prophetarum laudabilis numerus,
te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus.*

"The glorious band of apostles,
the noble company of prophets,
the white-robed army who shed their blood for Christ
all sing your praise."

Today the apostles, prophets and martyrs give praise to God. At the end of the first millennium they reached the banks of the Vistula and spread the seed of the Gospel. Following the battle of Mieszko in 966, many witnesses came into the land of the Piast, among whom Adalbert, Bishop of Prague, became the most famous. According to tradition, before reaching the Baltic, where he endured a martyr's death, he stopped in Kraków and proclaimed the Good News here. It seems that he preached on the spot where, after his death, a church dedicated to him was built, which still exists today. Adalbert's apostolic activity and his martyrdom are also linked in another way to the beginnings of the Church in Kraków. Near his tomb arose the Metropolitan See of Gniezno, which included the episcopal sees of Kolobrzeg, Wrocław and Kraków. At Gdansk, we gave thanks to God in a particular way for the life and work of this great patron of Poland, and it is right that in Kraków also we should gratefully recall his witness and martyrdom which have been a beacon of light for a thousand years.

Finally, at the dawn of the history of this Church, the flame of the pastoral ministry and heroic death of Saint Stanislaus was lit. When we hear in today's liturgy the words of Christ: "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11), we realize that through the work of this Saint these words are closely bound up with the history of the Church in Kraków. His heroic concern for the Lord's flock, for the lost sheep in need of help, became the model to which the Church in this city for centuries faithfully turned for inspiration. From generation to generation, the tradition of unshakeable perseverance in respecting God's law and, at the same time, in showing great love for man was passed on - this tradition came to birth at the tomb of the Bishop Saint Stanislaus of

Szczepanowo.

If today we return to the beginnings and to these figures, we do so to renew our awareness that the roots of the Church in Kraków are profoundly fixed in the apostolic tradition, in the prophetic mission and in the witness of martyrdom. Entire generations made this tradition, mission and martyrdom their own, and built their faith on them in the course of a millennium. Thanks to this point of reference, the Church in Kraków has always been in close union with the universal Church, and at the same time it developed its own historical character and wrote its own history as a unique and unrepeatable community of men and women sharing in the saving mission of Christ.

3. By staying in the current of the universal Church and simultaneously preserving its own unique character, this community gave shape to the history and culture of the city of Kraków, of the region and, it is possible to say, of the whole of Poland. What can witness more eloquently to this than the Wawel Cathedral? Today, while the voice of the Zygmunt bell seems to invite people to visit this mother church of Kraków, this treasure of the history of the Church and the Nation, let us go there on a spiritual pilgrimage. Let us stand in the midst of its builders and ask them what foundation did they lay under this construction to enable it to survive good times and bad, to give refuge to saints and heroes, shepherds and sovereigns, statesmen, creators of culture and entire generations of inhabitants of this city. Christ, who died and has risen, is he not its cornerstone? Let us kneel before the tabernacle in the Batory chapel, before the black Crucifix of Hedwig, near the *confessio* of Saint Stanislaus, let us go down into the crypt of Saint Leonard and rediscover the unique history of the Church of Kraków, which is joined with that of the city and the country. And every church, every religious chapel seems to tell the same story: it is due to the thousand year presence of the Church that the seed of the Gospel scattered here has borne abundant fruit in the history of this city, at the foot of the Wawel.

Does not the *Alma Mater* of Kraków confirm this? Was it not for love of Christ and obedience to his call to proclaim the Gospel to the nations that in the heart of Saint Hedwig, the Queen, there arose the desire to found the Faculty of Theology and to raise the Academy of Kraków to the rank of university? The fame of this University has been for centuries a source of pride for the Church in Kraków. From it emerged scholars of the calibre of Saint Jan Kanty, Piotr Wysz, Pawel Wlodkowic and others, who exercised great influence over the development of theological thought in the universal Church. How can we not mention Nicholas Copernicus, Stanislaus of Skalbmierz, Jan Kochanowski and all the hosts of those who grew in wisdom and, having loved truth, goodness and beauty, testified in various ways to having found in God their definitive crowning? What would Kraków be without this fruit of Saint Hedwig's faith and wisdom?

The grafting of the Church onto the history of this city took place not only in the churches, royal palaces and university halls, but wherever fidelity to the Gospel required the witness of service to those in need. The ancient annals and modern chronicles have much to say about parish and religious schools, hospitals and orphanages; they report much about the works of mercy, big and

small, which the people of Kraków accomplished, led by the enthusiasm of the preaching of Father Piotr Skarga, the humble example of Saint Brother Albert, and many other witnesses of practical love; they say much about the Church's great concern for the life, freedom and dignity of every person which had to be shown, without sparing sacrifice, in the distant past but also at times close to our generation, in the times of war, the post-war torment and the period of transformation.

If we list today the fruit of ten centuries of the existence of the Church in Kraków, we do so to inflame our hearts with gratitude to God, who in the course of this history has poured out countless graces upon his people. We must remember this goodness and exclaim with ever greater enthusiasm: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory, for the sake of your love and your truth" (*Ps* 115: 1), for what you have shown through the work of the Church in this land.

4. *Tu rex gloriae, Christe.*

Tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.

"You, Christ, are the king of glory,
Son of the eternal Father."

Today let us give glory to Christ. To him our hymn of praise is due. What value would the fruits of the Church's existence have if they were not the revelation of the saving work of the Son of God? When we heard proclaimed in today's liturgy of the word: "I am the good shepherd" (*Jn* 10:11), we discovered in a sense the most essential reason for our thanksgiving.

"I am the good shepherd, I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep" (*Jn* 10:14-15). Christ speaks in this way about himself. He in fact is the good shepherd. Saint Paul, in the *Letter to the Ephesians* helps us in a sense to deepen our understanding of this description. The Apostle writes that God in his Son "chose us ... before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (1:4- 7).

If Christ is the Good Shepherd, the unique Good Shepherd, and as such the King of all pastors in the Church, this is because in Him dwells the love which unites him to the Father. Through this love is accomplished the divine election, which the Father made in man's regard before the creation of the world. The eternal and only-begotten Son of God, who became man precisely in the name of this love, is concerned with one thing only: to multiply among men the number of adoptive sons who will respond to the Father's eternal election. For this very reason he is the Good Shepherd. He offers his life to defend everyone from death, to increase life in them. This life is in Him. By becoming Man he brought this life into the world with himself, as the Father's gift. As

the Good Shepherd, Christ's desire is to share this life, to bestow it on man, because only in this way - by sharing in God's life - can man, a mortal being, be freed from spiritual death. The liturgy of today's celebration shows us in a sense the deepest source of what the Church of Kraków has been on Polish soil for the past thousand years. It is the unique and never to be repeated accomplishment of the eternal plan of the Father, who has filled this community of God's People with a boundless spiritual blessing through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, while we listen today to Christ's parable of the Good Shepherd, we are aware that these words represent a measure to be applied to the history of the Church. Christ is the King of pastors, and down the centuries the pastors called by him have worked to bring about his kingdom. Thus through the parable of the Good Shepherd the thousand-year history of the Church in Kraków is revealed to us. We see all those who shared in the prophetic, priestly and royal mission of Christ through this Church - the entire People of God who during this millennium made up the Church in Kraków.

We see first those who, because of a special mandate of Christ, were shepherds of this People: the Bishops and priests. We see before us Saint Stanislaus, Blessed Wincenty Kadlubek, Iwo Odrowaz, Piotr Wysz, Zbigniew Olesnicki, Bernard Maciejowski and Adam Stefan Sapieha; present before us are Jan Dlugosz, Saint Jan Kanty and Blessed Piotr Dankowski, and many other bishops and priests, who are not only remembered in the Church but also inscribed in the history of the nation and its culture. How can we not mention here the Religious Orders! Already at the time of Saint Stanislaus, the Benedictines established themselves here, a little later the Cistercians, and after them came other orders and congregations, which produced apostles and pastors like Piotr Skarga, Saint Jerome Odrowaz, Blessed Stanislaus Kazimierczyk, Saint Maximilian, Saint Raphael Kalinowski.

If we embrace in our thoughts and hearts today all those who laboured as pastors in this Church for the kingdom of Christ, in historical perspective we see not only the priests, but also countless hosts of lay people. Before our eyes appear sovereigns and statesmen, led by Saint Hedwig and Saint Casimir, and with them a simple maidservant, Blessed Aniela Salawa, and the teacher of the Polytechnic, the Servant of God Jerzy Ciesielski, and also entire generations of parents, teachers, professors and students, doctors and nurses, business people and employees, artisans and farmers - men and women of different circumstances and professions. We also see the men and women who offered their lives to God and neighbour in the Religious Orders. As we gaze upon the images of Saint Brother Albert and Blessed Sister Faustina, we know that, in a sense, they represent all those who in some way reflected the parable of the Good Shepherd.

All these men and women of the Church, whether known by name or anonymous, by their life, their holiness, their everyday work and their suffering, testified in this land that God is love and that with this love God embraces everyone and leads them on the paths of this world to a new life. There is no greater reason than this for giving thanks for the thousand-year history of the Church

in the land of Kraków. There is no greater gift than the gift of holiness which this land has received from the hands of the Church over the past ten centuries. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (*Eph 1:3*).

Today I feel called in a particular way to give thanks for this thousand-year old community of Christ's pastors, clerics and lay people, because their witness to holiness and the environment of faith which they formed and continue to form in Kraków have made it possible, at the end of this millennium, for Christ's exhortation: "Peter, feed my lambs" (*Jn 21:15*) to descend upon the banks of the Vistula, at the foot of the Wawel Cathedral. It became possible for one man's weakness to find support in the power of the perennial faith, hope and charity of this land, and to give the response: "In the obedience of faith before Christ my Lord, entrusting myself to the Mother of Christ and of the Church, conscious of the great difficulty, I accept".

*5. Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine, et benedic hereditati tuae.
Et rege eos, et extolle illos usque in aeternum.*

"Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.
Rule them and uphold them for ever and ever."

Throughout its history, the Church of Kraków has survived many storms and many trials. To dwell only on this century, we know that in the first place it resisted the destructive force of war and occupation, and despite painful losses it upheld its dignity, thanks especially to the uncompromising attitude of the Prince Cardinal Adam Sapieha. In the half-century after the war, the Church faced new challenges brought on by Communist totalitarianism and the atheistic ideology. The Church overcame the period of persecutions without ever losing the strength of its witness. At that time, the profound unity of its parishes, pastors and faithful, the great work of the religious education of the young and the works of mercy revealed themselves to be powerful supports, set on the foundation of a deep faith. In this regard, it is impossible not to recall my predecessor on the throne of Saint Stanislaus, Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak.

A special factor in the renewal of the Church of Kraków were the labours of the Pastoral Synod of the Archdiocese in the years 1972-1979. I recall that unprecedented commitment of the faithful in the synodal groups, in the work of the individual commissions and that deep reflection of the Church of Kraków on itself. It led to a great examination of the past and present, but with a simultaneous look to the future.

Now, as we give thanks for the past splendour of this Church, in the same spirit we must look at today and tomorrow. We must ask ourselves: What has our generation done with this great heritage? Does the People of God of this Church continue to live from the tradition of the apostles, the mission of the prophets and the blood of the martyrs?

We must give an answer to these questions. In accordance with this answer, we must plan for the future so that it will be seen that the treasure of faith, hope and charity, which our fathers kept in the midst of struggles and which they handed down to us, will not be lost by this generation lulled into sleep, no longer as in the work of Wyspianski, *The Wedding*, by the dream of freedom, but by freedom itself. We bear a great responsibility for the development of faith, for the salvation of contemporary man and for the fate of the Church in the new millennium.

Hence, with Saint Paul, I ask you, brothers and sisters: take as your model the sound principles, in faith and love in Jesus Christ. Safeguard the deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you (cf. *2 Tim* 1:13-14). Carry it into the third Christian millennium with the pride and humility of witnesses. Transmit to future generations the message of divine Mercy, which in this city was made manifest to the world. At the end of the twentieth century the world appears more than ever to be in need of such a message. Bring it into the new times as a promise of hope and pledge of salvation.

Merciful God, sustain the people of this land with your grace. Make the sons and daughters of this Church a generation of witnesses for future centuries. Ensure that in the power of the Holy Spirit the Church in Kraków and throughout the Fatherland may continue the work of sanctification which you entrusted to it a thousand years ago.

*Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos,
quemadmodum speravimus in te.
In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum.*

“May your mercy always be with us, Lord,
for we have hoped in you.
In you, Lord, we put our trust:
we shall not be put to shame.”