



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VOYAGE TO POLAND

DEDICATION OF THE SHRINE OF DIVINE MERCY

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Kraków-Łagiewniki, 17 August 2002

*"O inconceivable and unfathomable Mercy of God,
Who can worthily adore you and sing your praises?
O greatest attribute of God Almighty,
You are the sweet hope of sinners"
(Diary, 951).*

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. Today I repeat these simple and straightforward words of Saint Faustina, in order to join her and all of you in adoring the inconceivable and unfathomable mystery of God's mercy. Like Saint Faustina, we wish to proclaim that apart from the mercy of God there is no other source of hope for mankind. We desire to repeat with faith: *Jesus, I trust in you!*

This proclamation, this confession of trust in the all-powerful love of God, is especially needed in our own time, when mankind is experiencing bewilderment in the face of many manifestations of evil. *The invocation of God's mercy* needs to rise up from the depth of hearts filled with suffering, apprehension and uncertainty, and at the same time yearning for an infallible source of hope. That is why we have come here today, to this Shrine of Łagiewniki, in order to glimpse once more in Christ the face of the Father: "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" (2 Cor 1:3). With the eyes of our soul, we long to look into the eyes of the merciful Jesus, in order to find deep within his gaze the reflection of his inner life, as well as the light of grace which we have already received so often, and which God holds out to us anew each day and on the last day.

2. We are about to dedicate this new church to the Mercy of God. Before doing so, I wish to *offer heartfelt thanks* to those who contributed to its construction. In a special way I thank Cardinal Franciszek, who has put so much effort into this undertaking as a sign of his personal devotion to the Divine Mercy. My thoughts turn with affection to the Sisters of the Merciful Mother of God, whom I thank for their work in spreading the message left behind by Saint Sister Faustina. I greet the Cardinals and Bishops of Poland, headed by the Cardinal Primate, as well as the Bishops coming from various parts of the world. I rejoice in the presence of the diocesan and religious priests, and the seminarians.

My cordial greeting goes to all those taking part in this celebration, especially the representatives of the Foundation of the Shrine of Divine Mercy who oversaw the work of construction, as well as the builders involved in the various projects. I know that many of those present offered generous material support to the work of construction. I pray that God will reward their magnanimity and their commitment by his blessing!

3. Brothers and Sisters! As we dedicate this new church, we too can ask the question which troubled King Solomon when he consecrated the Temple of Jerusalem as the house of God: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kg 8:27). Yes, at first glance, to bind certain "places" to God's presence might seem inappropriate. We can never forget that time and space belong to God in their entirety. Yet even though time and the entire world may be considered his "temple", God has chosen certain times and places to enable people to experience in a special way his presence and his grace. Impelled by their sense of faith, people journey to these places, confident that there they will truly find themselves in the presence of God.

In this same spirit of faith I have come to Łagiewniki to dedicate this new church. I am convinced that this is the special place chosen by God to sow the grace of his mercy. I pray that this church will always be a place where the message of God's merciful love is proclaimed; a place of conversion and repentance; a place for the celebration of the Eucharist; a fountain of mercy; a place of prayer and of constant appeals for mercy for ourselves and for the whole world. I pray in the words of Solomon: "Have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, hearkening to the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prays before you this day; that your eyes may be open night and day towards this house... Hearken to the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray in this place. Hear in heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive" (1 Kg 8:28-30).

4. *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him"* (Jn 4:23). When we read these words of the Lord Jesus here in the Shrine of Divine Mercy, we are particularly aware that *no one can come here except in Spirit and truth*. It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, who guides us along the ways of Divine Mercy. By convincing the world "concerning sin and righteousness and

judgement" (Jn 16:8), he also makes known the fullness of salvation in Christ. This "convincing" concerning sin *is doubly related to the Cross of Christ*. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit enables us, through Christ's Cross, to acknowledge sin, every sin, *in the full dimension of evil which it contains and inwardly conceals*. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit permits us, again through the Christ's Cross, to see sin *in the light of the mysterium pietatis*, that is, of the merciful and forgiving love of God (cf. *Dominum et vivificantem*, 32).

Consequently, this "convincing concerning sin" also becomes a conviction that *sin can be laid aside* and that man can be restored to his dignity as a son beloved of God. Indeed, the Cross "is the most profound condescension of God to man [...]. The Cross is like a touch of eternal love upon the most painful wounds of man's earthly existence" (*Dives in misericordia*, 8). The cornerstone of this Shrine will always be a reminder of this truth, for it was brought here from Mount Calvary, as if from beneath the Cross on which Jesus Christ triumphed over sin and death.

I firmly believe that this new church will always be a place where people will come before God in Spirit and truth. They will come with the trust which accompanies all those who humbly open their hearts to the working of God's merciful love, to that love which is stronger than even the greatest sin. Here, in the fire of divine love, human hearts will burn with desire for conversion, and whoever looks for hope will find comfort.

5. "Eternal Father, I offer to you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for our sins and those of the whole world; by the sufferings of his Passion, have mercy upon us and upon the whole world" (*Diary*, 476). *Upon us and upon the whole world ...* How greatly today's world needs God's mercy! In every continent, from the depth of human suffering, a cry for mercy seems to rise up. Where hatred and the thirst for revenge dominate, where war brings suffering and death to the innocent, there the grace of mercy is needed in order to settle human minds and hearts and to bring about peace. Wherever respect for life and human dignity are lacking, there is need of God's merciful love, in whose light we see the inexpressible value of every human being. Mercy is needed in order to ensure that every injustice in the world will come to an end in the splendour of truth.

Today, therefore, in this Shrine, I wish *solemnly to entrust the world to Divine Mercy*. I do so with the burning desire that the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, *may be made known to all the peoples of the earth* and fill their hearts with hope. May this message radiate from this place to our beloved homeland and throughout the world. May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for his final coming" (cf. *Diary*, 1732).

This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. *In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness!* I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to the Church in Kraków and Poland, and to all the

votaries of Divine Mercy who will come here from Poland and from throughout the world. *May you be witnesses to mercy!*

6. God, merciful Father,
in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love
and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman.

Bend down to us sinners,
heal our weakness,
conquer all evil,
and grant that all the peoples of the earth
may experience your mercy.
In You, the Triune God,
may they ever find the source of hope.

Eternal Father,
by the Passion and Resurrection of your Son,
have mercy on us and upon the whole world!

Amen.

At the end of the Mass, before the final blessing, the Holy Father made these personal remarks:

At the end of this solemn liturgy, I desire to say that many of my personal memories are tied to this place. During the Nazi occupation, when I was working in the Solvay factory near here, I used to come here. Even now I recall the street that goes from Borek Falecki to Debniki that I took every day going to work on the different turns with the wooden shoes on my feet. They're the shoes that we used to wear then. How was it possible to imagine that one day the man with the wooden shoes would consecrate the Basilica of the Divine Mercy at Lagiewniki of Kraków.

I rejoice for the construction of this beautiful shrine dedicated to the Divine Mercy. I entrust to the care of Cardinal Macharski and to the whole Archdiocese of Kraków and to the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy the material, and especially, the spiritual upkeep of the shrine. May this collaboration in the work of spreading the devotion of the Merciful Jesus give blessed fruit in the hearts of the faithful in Poland and in the whole world.

May the merciful God bless abundantly all the pilgrims who come and who will come here in the future.

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