



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

Address at Departure Ceremony

Thursday, 17 June 1999, Kraków

1. My homeland, beloved country, blessings upon you!

At the end of my pilgrimage in the land of my birth, from the depths of my heart I express this hope for God's blessing and I direct it to the whole of Poland and to all its people. I wish to include the feelings, thoughts and prayers which have been with me every day on my pilgrim's journey. How else can I express my love for this land and this people, except through an earnest prayer that the God who is love will bless everyone abundantly? Each time I visit Poland I am confirmed in the conviction that there is no lack of people of pure heart who live every day in poverty of spirit, in gentleness, in mercy, and as peace-makers. By perseverance they obtain the grace of God's blessing upon their homeland. Thus it has been this time too, beginning in Gdansk, through Pelplin, Elbląg, Bydgoszcz, Torun, Elk, Siedlce, Drohiczyn, Sandomierz, Zamosc, Warsaw, Lowicz, Sosnowiec, Gliwice, Stary Sacz, to my birthplace Wadowice and then Kraków. Everywhere I have prayed that the daily lives of the people who live in the spirit of the Beatitudes will bear fruit for the prosperity of all in this land. I give thanks to God that I have also been able to place this prayer at the feet of Mary, Queen of Poland, at Jasna Góra.

2. During this pilgrimage, on the eve of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, it has been granted to us to return to the places, events and people who bear eloquent witness to the fact that during the thousand years of the Church's life in our homeland, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God and his redeeming work have penetrated deeply into its history, forming for centuries its spiritual profile and providing a solid foundation for the building of its happy future. The celebration of the millennium of the establishment of the organizational structures of the Church in Poland could only have begun in the presence of Saint Adalbert. It was in fact his canonization which was

the beginning of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. We have thus gone back to the apostolic work and the martyr's death of the Bishop of Prague. Remembering the price he had to pay for the gift of the faith which he brought to us, we have prayed to God that our generation may be enabled to pass on the whole of this legacy to the generations of the third millennium, And in our prayer we have been supported by Regina Protmann, Edmund Bojanowski, Wincenty Frelichowski, the one hundred and eight martyrs and Princess Kinga, whom, in the name of the Church, I have beatified and canonized. The example of their lives and their intercession have been through the centuries a special gift to the Church in Poland and throughout the world. For this gift, I offer ceaseless thanks to Divine Providence.

An eloquent sign of the willingness to accept responsibility for the future of the Church in our country has been the Second Plenary Synod, which in these years has become an opportunity for shared reflection by all believers, clerical and lay, on how best to carry out the saving mission in the reality of today's world. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we celebrated the solemn closure of the Synod's work, entrusting its fruits to the love of God. It is my hope that by implementing the Synod's decisions, the Church in Poland will continue in effective ways the work of the new evangelization.

3. I am glad to have had the chance, during this pilgrimage, to meet those who exercise legislative, executive and judicial power in our country. In this exceptional context, we have been able to share our conviction that the common good is the value around which people can gather as one, working together creatively, despite differences of belief and political views, which is normal for a democracy. I trust that the President, both Chambers of Parliament, the Government of the Republic and the Courts of every level will faithfully serve their fellow countrymen, keeping before their eyes the well-being of the homeland and the people, and be able to enjoy the results of this service.

On my pilgrimage through the different corners of the land, I have been able to see that it is developing in every way. I know that this is happening because of the efforts of the whole of society, at times requiring austerity and many sacrifices. To all those who are lovingly forging a prosperous future for the homeland I wish to express today my sincere appreciation and gratitude. At the same time, we recognize that on this path of development there are obstacles, problems and dangers. Once more I wish to express my hope that, with God's help and the willing cooperation of everyone, all difficulties will be overcome. I pray to God for this, thinking above all of the spiritual values which the past generations faithfully preserved and which cannot be abandoned amid rightful concerns for the material well-being of the country. As Pope and as a son of this nation, I address to all people of good will, and in a special way to my brothers and sisters in the faith, a fervent call to do everything possible to ensure that Poland enters the third millennium not only as a politically stable and economically prosperous State, but also strengthened by the spirit of mutual and social love.

4. Giving glory to God for the gift of this visit, I want also to thank all those who have made it possible. Through the President of the Republic of Poland, I thank the State Authorities for the invitation and for all their work for the preparation and successful carrying out of the pilgrimage. I thank them for all their kindnesses. I also thank the regional and local authorities who have spared no effort or resource to ensure that the meetings of the faithful with the Pope took place in beautiful settings and in a climate of peace and joy. May God reward you for your hospitality! A sincere expression of thanks goes to the Polish Army, to the Police and to the Fire Services, to the other security services and to the countless numbers of volunteers – to all those who with great dedication and genuine kindness have seen to the safety of this visit. Nor can I forget those who with great dedication have ensured constant medical and health service for those needing care. I thank the journalists and those who, through radio, television, the internet and the written word, have worked together carefully to transmit reports of the papal visit, as a service to those who for various reasons have not been able to attend personally. To everyone who has contributed in any way to the efficient and decorous running of this pilgrimage, I say with all my heart: “May God reward you!”

5. With special gratitude, I address the Church in Poland. During these days I have visited many Dioceses – some for the first time – but I have not been able to go to all the places to which I was invited. So once more I want to assure you that in spirit I have been in the whole of Poland, in every prefecture, every parish, every religious community and every family home. I have come for everyone without exception, to remind them at the close of this millennium of the one essential truth upon which our faith is built – the truth that “God is love”.

I cordially thank the Cardinal Primate, the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops for the preparation of this pilgrimage. With all my heart I embrace the priests. I wish to thank them for what they have contributed to this visit, and also for their faithful daily service of the People of God in Poland. Each day I pray to Christ, the High Priest, that in fulfilling their pastoral ministry they may enjoy his grace and the people’s gratitude. With this prayer I also include the consecrated persons who in religious communities take up the tasks assigned to them by their charism and the needs of the Church. I thank them also for their perseverance in prayer, especially during this pilgrimage, for their humble work of mercy and for their apostolic witness of life in keeping with the evangelical counsels. I commend to God all the students of the Major Seminaries. I thank them for their active involvement in the different moments of this pilgrimage and especially for their liturgical service. I pray that they will open themselves ever more fully to the action of the Holy Spirit, who is preparing them for the difficult tasks of the new millennium.

I express my particular appreciation to all the faithful of the Church in Poland. I know how much effort, what material and spiritual sacrifices they have put into preparing for this visit. I thank them for their great kindness and their warm welcome, and above all for the witness of their dynamic faith. With gratitude I embrace all people of good will in Poland. May the good God reward with his abundant blessing every act of generosity! I look lovingly upon the suffering of everyone bearing

bears the cross of sickness, old age, loneliness and pain. I know how much I owe to the sick, who have been close to me not only during these days but who accompany me through all my ministry in the See of Saint Peter. I thank them most sincerely for this powerful support. I greet the young people who have been present in great numbers at all our meetings. I thank them for their youthful fervour, their faith and their deep prayerfulness. I pray that as they enter the new millennium they will enthusiastically bear the love of God to the future generations.

6. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. We have lived the pilgrimage which is now ending in a spirit of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Redemption and for crossing the threshold of the new millennium. It has been a time of shared prayer and reflection, a time of giving thanks for the past and entrusting to God everything that Poland lives by today and will carry into the future. I believe that they have been fruitful days and that their fruit will endure. This solemn time is about to end. I hope, however, that the spirit of peace, unity, and cooperation in all that is good which has reigned among us will continue to motivate the efforts of every person who has at heart the prosperity of the homeland and the happiness of its people.

As I return to the Vatican, I do not abandon the land of my birth. I take with me the image of my homeland, from the Baltic to the Tatra, and I keep in my heart all that I have been granted to experience among my fellow countrymen. I want to assure you once again that in my thoughts and prayers Poland and the Polish people have a special place. I ask you, beloved brothers and sisters, to support me in my Petrine ministry for as long as Divine Providence enables me to carry it out.

I entrust each and every one of you to the protection of the Queen of Poland of Jasna Góra. To her maternal love, I commend your daily lives, all that you desire and all that you do.

“The love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!” God bless my homeland and all my fellow countrymen!