



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO AUSTRIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 850th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE SHRINE OF MARIAZELL

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

International Airport of Vienna/Schwechat
Sunday, 9 September 2007

Mr President,

As I prepare to leave Austria at the conclusion of my pilgrimage for the 850th anniversary of the National Shrine of Mariazell, I recall with gratitude these days filled with memorable experiences. I feel that I have come to know even better this beautiful country and its people.

I offer heartfelt thanks to my Brother Bishops, to the Government, to the public authorities and, not least, to the many volunteers who assisted in the organization of this visit. I pray that you will share richly in the graces we have received in these days. My warm, personal thanks go in particular to you, Mr President, for your gracious words of farewell, for having accompanied me on this pilgrimage, and for all the attention you have shown me. Thank you!

Once again I was able to experience Mariazell as a particularly grace-filled place, a place which in these days welcomed all of us and gave us inner strength for the road ahead. The throngs of people who joined in our celebration in the Basilica, in Mariazell itself and throughout Austria should inspire us, with Mary, to look to Christ and, as persons whom God looks upon with love, and to face with confidence the path to the future. It was nice that the wind and the bad weather could not stop us, but, in the end, added even more to our joy.

At the very beginning of my pilgrimage, our common prayer in the Square “Am Hof” brought us together in a way which transcended national borders and directly showed us Austria’s open hospitality, which is one of this country’s finest qualities.

May the quest for mutual understanding, and the creative development of ever new ways of building trust between individuals and peoples, continue to inspire the national and international policies of this nation. Vienna, faithful to its rich history and its location in the vital centre of Europe, can offer a specific contribution in this regard, by consistently upholding the traditional values of the continent, values shaped by the Christian faith, to the European institutions and to the work of promoting international, intercultural and interreligious relations.

On life’s pilgrimage we frequently pause to consider with gratitude the progress already made, and to look with prayerful hope at the road still before us. I made just such a stop at the monastery of Heiligenkreuz. The tradition cultivated there by the Cistercian monks puts us in touch with our roots, whose strength and beauty ultimately derive from God himself.

Today I was able to celebrate Sunday, the Lord’s Day with you – representing all the parishes of Austria – in the Cathedral of Saint Stephen. This gave me an opportunity to be united in a special way with the faithful in all the parishes of Austria.

Finally, a very moving moment for me was my meeting with volunteers from the charitable organizations which are so many and varied in Austria. The thousands of volunteers I was able to see represent the many thousands more who, throughout the country, by their readiness to help others, show forth humanity’s noblest features and help believers to recognize the love of Christ.

Gratitude and joy fill my heart at this moment. To all of you who have been with me during these days, to all who put so much effort and hard work into making this very full programme proceed so smoothly, and to all who joined in my pilgrimage and shared in our celebrations, I once more express my deep gratitude. As I leave you, I entrust the present and the future of this country to the intercession of the Gracious Mother of Mariazell, *Magna Mater Austriae*, and to all the saints and beati of Austria. With them we want to *look to Christ*, our life and our hope. With great affection I offer to one and all a sincere “*Vergelt’s Gott!*”