



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC
(SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2009)

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS BY THE HOLY FATHER

Stará Ruzyně International Airport - Prague
Monday, 28 September 2009

(Video)

*Pane prezidente,
páni kardinálové,
bratři v biskupské službě,
Vaše Excelence,
dámy a pánové!*

Ve chvíli slavnostního rozloučení vám chci vyjádřit své poděkování za štědrou pohostinnost, které se mi dostalo během krátkého pobytu v této nádherné zemi.

[Mr President, Dear Cardinals, Brother Bishops, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, As I come to bid farewell, I wish to thank you for your generous hospitality during my short stay in this beautiful country.]

I am especially grateful to you, Mr President, for your words and for the time spent at your residence. On this feast of Saint Wenceslaus, your country's guardian and patron, allow me once again to offer you my sincere good wishes for your name-day. As today is also the name-day of

Bishop Václav Malý, I offer my greetings to him too, and I wish to thank him for all his hard work in coordinating the arrangements for my pastoral visit to the Czech Republic. To Cardinal Vlk, Archbishop Graubner, and all who did so much to ensure the smooth unfolding of the series of meetings and celebrations, I am deeply grateful. Naturally I include in my thanks the public authorities, the media, the many volunteers who helped to direct the crowds, and all the faithful who have been praying that this visit might bear fruit for the good of the Czech nation and for the Church in the region.

I shall treasure the memory of the moments of prayer that I was able to spend together with the Bishops, priests and faithful of this country. It was particularly moving this morning to celebrate Mass at Stará Boleslav, site of the martyrdom of the young duke Wenceslaus, and to venerate him at his tomb on Saturday evening in the majestic Cathedral that dominates Prague's skyline. Yesterday in Moravia, where Saints Cyril and Methodius launched their apostolic mission, I was able to reflect in prayerful thanksgiving on the origins of Christianity in this region, and indeed throughout the Slavic territories. The Church in this country has been truly blessed with a remarkable array of missionaries and martyrs, as well as contemplative saints, among whom I would single out Saint Agnes of Bohemia, whose canonization just twenty years ago providentially heralded the liberation of this country from atheist oppression.

My meeting yesterday with representatives of other Christian communities brought home to me the importance of ecumenical dialogue in this land which suffered so much from the consequences of religious division at the time of the Thirty Years' War. Much has already been achieved in healing the wounds of the past, and decisive steps have been taken along the path towards reconciliation and true unity in Christ. In building further on these solid foundations, there is an important role for the academic community to play, through its uncompromising search for truth. I was glad to have the opportunity to spend time yesterday with representatives of the nation's universities, and to express my esteem for the noble vocation to which they have dedicated their lives.

I was especially delighted to meet the young people, and to encourage them to build on the best traditions of this nation's past, particularly its Christian heritage. According to a saying attributed to Franz Kafka, "Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old" (Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*). If our eyes remain open to the beauty of God's creation and our minds to the beauty of his truth, then we may indeed hope to remain young and to build a world that reflects something of that divine beauty, so as to inspire future generations to do likewise.

Mr President, dear friends: I thank you once again and I promise to remember you in my prayers and to carry you in my heart. May God bless the Czech Republic!

Ať Pražské Jezulátko je i nadále vaší inspirací a vede všechny rodiny vašeho národa. Kéž vám všem Bůh žehná!

[May the Holy Infant of Prague continue to inspire and guide you and all the families of this nation!
May God bless all of you!]

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