



The Holy See

POPE JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 18 June 1997

Historic celebrations marked Polish visit

1. I would like to begin today's meeting by telling you about the recent [pilgrimage to Poland](#) which divine Providence gave me the opportunity to make. There were three principal reasons for this Pastoral Visit: the International Eucharistic Congress in Wrocław, the 1,000th anniversary of St Adalbert's martyrdom and the 600th anniversary of the foundation of the Jagiellonian University of Kraków. These events were the nucleus of the whole itinerary, which from 31 May to 10 June included Wrocław, Legnica, Gorzów, Wielkopolski, Gniezno, Poznań, Kalisz, Częstochowa, Zakopane, LudŹmierz, Kraków, Dukla and Krosno, concentrating on three great cities: Wrocław, the site of the 46th International Eucharistic Congress, Gniezno, a city linked with the death of St Adalbert, and Kraków, where the Jagiellonian University was founded.

2. *The 46th International Eucharistic Congress in Wrocław* began on Trinity Sunday, 25 May, with the Eucharistic celebration presided at by my Legate, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State. A rich spiritual and liturgical programme filled the entire week, centring on the main theme: "*For freedom Christ has set us free*" (Gal 5:1). The Lord enabled me to take part in the conclusion of the work and so, on the last day of May, I was able to venerate Christ in the Eucharist, adoring him in the cathedral of Wrocław together with people who had come from all over the world. That same day I took part in an ecumenical prayer service with representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities. The next day, Sunday, 1 June, the Congress ended with a solemn Mass — *statio orbis*.

An extraordinary ecclesial experience, the International Eucharistic Congress brought together many theologians, priests, religious and lay people. It was certainly a time of deep reflection on the

mystery of the Eucharist and gave Christians from Poland, Europe and other parts of the world an opportunity to spend much time in prayer, prayers which were led at times by the Cardinals and Bishops of different nations who had been invited for the occasion. The Congress held in Wroclaw was the 46th since the first, held in Lille, France, in 1881. In recent years the International Eucharistic Congresses have normally been held every four years, in the following order: Lourdes, France, 1981; Nairobi, Kenya, 1985; Seoul, Korea, 1989; Seville, Spain, 1993. The next one will be held in Rome, to mark the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

3. *The millennium of St Adalbert*, martyred in the year 997, was the second reason for my visit. He came from Bohemia and belonged to the princely Slavník family. Born in Libice in the territory of the present day Diocese of Hradec Králové, he became Bishop of Prague at a young age. At the end of last April, we solemnly celebrated Adalbert's millennium in the Czech Republic, with the participation of many Bishops from countries linked with this saint's life and work. St Adalbert came to Poland towards the end of his life, invited by King Boleslaw the Brave. He accepted the invitation to evangelize the pagan peoples who lived in the regions of the Baltic Sea. There he met his death, and after martyrdom his body was ransomed by King Boleslaw the Brave and taken to Gniezno which then became the centre of devotion to St Adalbert. An important meeting, not only religious but also political, took place near the relics of the holy martyr in the year 1000. Emperor Otto III and the Papal Legate both went to Gniezno for the occasion. Their meeting with King Boleslaw the Brave is known as the *Gniezno Meeting*, and it was precisely then, in Gniezno, that the first metropolitan see was established in what was then Poland. From the political standpoint, the Gniezno Meeting was an important event because it marked Poland's entry, under the Piasts, into a united Europe. At the recent commemoration of the millennium of St Adalbert's death, we were once again linked with that historic event and with its particular importance for our continent. *The Presidents of the countries connected with the tradition of St Adalbert came to Gniezno to remember him*: from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary. Once again I thank the Lord and all those who worked hard to arrange this important event.

4. *The foundation of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków* was the third reason for my visit. This first university in Poland was founded by King Casimir the Great in 1364. It was a Studium Generale, but not yet a full university since it lacked a faculty of theology. In 1397 Queen Hedwig and her husband Wladyslaw Jagiello did all that was required to establish the Theology Faculty. Thanks to the initiative taken by the founders of the Jagiellonian dynasty, a university with full rights came into being in Kraków, which very soon became an important centre of study, famous not only in Poland but throughout the Europe of that time.

For the city of Kraków and the university community 8 June was a great celebration: Queen Hedwig was canonized at last, after 600 years. On that occasion there was a meeting with representatives of the Polish universities, who not only took part in the solemn Eucharistic celebration but also in the academic convocation held at the tomb of St John of Kęty, in the

Academy's Church of St Anne. For all those linked with the Alma Mater of Kraków, it was an unusually solemn moment.

On my last day in Poland another canonization took place, that of John of Dukla, a 15th-century Franciscan who was also connected with academic life at the University of Kraków. Although he was born in Dukla, he lived his life and served as a Franciscan in Lviv. I thank the Lord for allowing me to honour his memory at his birthplace, although his canonization took place in Krosno, in the Archdiocese of Przemyśl.

In addition to the two canonizations during my pilgrimage, I had the joy of proclaiming two blessed on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 6 June, in Zakopane: Maria Bernardina Jabłońska, co-foundress of the Congregation of the Albertine Sisters, and Maria Karłowska, foundress of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters.

5. Dear brothers and sisters, as I address my grateful thoughts to the Lord, I would once again like to express my deep gratitude to everyone who in various ways contributed to preparing and conducting this pilgrimage to my homeland. I am grateful to the State and Church authorities, to the organizations that did all they could to make my journey peaceful and successful, as well as to every other institution involved in organizing it. I also thank the management and employees of radio and television, who enabled Poland and the whole world to share the excitement of those who were able to attend the events in person.

I express my deep joy at having been able, during my eleven-day pilgrimage to my country, to join so many of my compatriots in singing the Te Deum to thank the Lord for the many blessings granted to Poland and the whole world over the last 1,000 years.

To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors the Holy Father said:

I am pleased to greet the distinguished members of the World Psychiatric Association meeting in Rome. May your important work of healing always be inspired by an integral vision of the human person and respect for the inviolable dignity and transcendent vocation of every individual. Upon all the English-speaking visitors, especially those from England, Ireland, Malta, South Africa, Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and the United States, I cordially invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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