



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
TO NORWAY, ICELAND, FINLAND,
DENMARK AND SWEDEN

**EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION
IN THE CATHOLIC YOUTH CENTRE**

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Øm (Denmark)
Wednesday, 7 June 1989

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matth. 28, 18).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Christ spoke these words at the end of his messianic mission. He was about to complete his earthly sojourn. He had to return to the Father. *“All authority in heaven and on earth” is the result of his redeeming work.* The Son of God, of one being with the Father, has authority because of his divinity; the Son of God, sent into the world as man, *has obtained authority at the price of his blood.*

By virtue of this authority, Christ, as he returns to the Father, *sends the apostles out into the whole world:* “Go... make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (*Ibid.* 28, 19). These words receive their full meaning *on Pentecost Day in Jerusalem.* This marks the Church’s beginning in history: in that holy city, in Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth. The coming of the *Holy Spirit* on the apostles assembled in the Upper Room with Christ’s Mother is the beginning of the age of the Church.

Every nation is destined to hear Christ’s words. Therefore, today we must ask: *How and when did the apostles of Christ arrive in your native land?* Who were the first among your ancestors to be

baptized? How long has it been since your nation entered *that Kingdom*, which Christ entrusted to his apostles and to all those who would build on the foundation which they had laid? These questions can be answered in different ways by the various groups of Catholics present here today.

[Text in Danish]

Det er med stor glæde at jeg fejrer denne eukaresti sammen med alle jer i disse smukke omgivelser, hvor ruinerne af Cistercienser klosteret minder os om evengeliseringen af det vestlige Danmark for mange arhundreder siden. I som er *Katolikker af dansk oprindelse kan se tilbage med taksomhed og stolthed* til dem som har været før jer i troen, til dem som i, hver generation har taget Herrens bud til hjertet at "gøre disciple af alle nationerne".

Matte I altid leve og vokse i denne tro.

I also wish to greet the *Danish Catholics of Polish or Vietnamese descent, as well as the visitors from Germany.*

[Text in Polish]

Drodzy bracia i siostry polskiego pochodzenia! Niektóre z waszych rodzin przebywają tutaj od czasów pierwszej wojny światowej. Inni są emigrantami nowszej daty. Stanowicie pomost chrześcijańskiej wiary i kultury w Europie Północnej. Niech miłość do Matki Bożej, którą wy i wasze rodziny przynieśliście z Polski, nadal wzrasta w sanktuariach, takich jak tutejsze sanktuarium w Om. Oby ta miłość podtrzymywała was zawsze w praktykowaniu waszej wiary katolickiej.

[Text in Vietnamese]

Trong Chúa, tôi thân ái chào mừng anh chị em đến từ Việt Nam. Năm ngoái, nhiều người trong anh chị em đã về Roma, du lịch Phong Thánh cho các Chân Phước Tu Đạo Việt Nam, và ít lâu sau một Trung Tâm hành hương dâng kính các ngài đã được xây tại đây. Tôi cầu xin cho anh chị em luôn được gương anh dũng làm chứng cho Tin Mừng của các Ngài soi sáng, để anh chị em cùng kiên trung sống Đức Tin Công giáo, và duy trì các truyền thống gia đình mạnh mẽ của anh chị em.

[Text in German]

Liebe Brüder und Schwestern aus Norddeutschland, eure Anwesenheit erinnert uns daran, daß *unser Glaube alle Grenzen überschreitet und uns alle als eine einzige Familie Gottes vereint.* Es ist eine große Freude für mich, daß mein Besuch in Dänemark es euch ermöglicht, diese Eucharistie mit dem Papst zu feiern. Ich hoffe, daß meine Anwesenheit euch in eurem

katholischen Glauben sowie in eurer Liebe zu Christus und zu seiner Kirche stärkt.

2. I know that Catholics in this part of Denmark sometimes feel isolated because of the distance which separates them from one another. The fact that few Catholics are nearby to offer fellowship and support presents you with a special challenge as you seek to practise the faith and to bring up your children as Catholics. Always remember that even the most isolated Catholics are not alone. *The smallest of your communities in the North is still part of the universal Church*; each is united with the Church in Rome and with Catholics in every land and nation.

Another source of encouragement for you is the example given by many of your neighbours who, though not Catholic, try to live their lives in fidelity to their Christian Baptism. They desire with all their hearts to follow Jesus Christ and serve him. *A true ecumenical spirit enables Christians to respect each other as fellow pilgrims and to help one another to proclaim the Gospel. Together we can bear witness to God's love*, by meeting the spiritual and material needs of others, and by bearing witness to Christ among those who have little faith or none at all. To all the members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities here today I offer a special greeting of peace.

3. As we recall the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations, we must keep in mind the *invisible action of the Holy Spirit* who is at work in the whole of creation. To use the words of the Creed, we profess the Holy Spirit to be truly the "giver of life".

People today are aware of theories about how the universe came *into existence*. *But Saint Paul sees something in creation that is not visible* to scientists, something that escapes the largest of telescopes as well as the most refined of microscopes. In his Letter to the Romans he makes us aware of another kind of development which is also at work in the created world: *the process of transformation in the Holy Spirit*, by which humanity and all creation are prepared for the Kingdom of God.

Paul writes that "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together... and not only the creation, *but we ourselves*, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, *groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies*" (Rom. 8, 22-23). *The Holy Spirit is at work in the power of the Redemption*; and his invisible action strengthens the apostolic mission of the Church among the nations. it is in this sense above all that "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given" to Christ as Redeemer of the world.

4. The power of the Holy Spirit at work in creation makes us a people of hope. Amid all our experiences of the material world *hope preserves within us the certainty* of another world: *the Kingdom* in which God will be "all in all" (cfr. 1Cor. 15, 28). Hope is like a dynamo of energy for the divine realization of God's plan for the future of the world, and especially for the future of the human family. *The future of man in God* – this is what Saint Paul is referring to when he says: "If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience".

At times this hope is tested. *We may be tempted to think that evil is stronger than good.* Prejudice, conflict and hatred take a fearful toll on the human spirit and leave destruction, suffering and death in their wake. Slavery to self under the guise of freedom leads to the exploitation of others and the lessening of one's own human dignity, even the loss of one's soul. There are also the more subtle temptations that come from the indiscriminate pursuit of material things. These can *blind us to the transcendent spiritual destiny* of which Saint Paul speaks. And then there is the greatest temptation of all, fostered by the illusion of self-sufficiency in a technological world the temptation to forget the God who made us, the temptation to live and do as we please without obedience to his law. This is to forget *the truth about all created beings* expressed in the words of today's Responsorial Psalm:

"If you, Lord, take back your spirit, they die,
 returning to the dust from which they came,
 you send forth your spirit, they are created;
 and you renew the face of the earth" (Cfr. *Ps.* 104, 29-30)

At this liturgy, dear brothers and sisters, we proclaim an end to all hopelessness, an end to all despair. We celebrate *the future of man in God made possible by Christ's victory over sin.* We rejoice that "the *Spirit helps us in our weakness*" (*Rom.* 8, 26). He *is constantly coming to the Church in order to help her.* He also comes *to each one of us* so that we may fulfil our earthly responsibilities towards the Kingdom of God and the gift of eternal life.

Christian faith radiates hope, even as it challenges us with the Cross, with personal conversion. Christ conquered sin by dying for sinners, and he now reigns in our world with *the hidden power of love*, the power of the Holy Spirit, even in the midst of sin. As Christians we are individually called to believe in this hidden power We are also called like the first apostles to proclaim God's Kingdom by word and deed: "Go... make disciples of all the nations" (*Matth.* 28, 19).

5. Within this context of *hope* I wish to say a word to all the young people here today. I understand that for many years Øm has been *a centre for youth activities, which have given young Catholics an experience of fellowship*, a shared sense of belonging to the Church. I join the whole Church in Denmark in fervent prayer that the gift of eternal life which each of you received at your Baptism will never be lost because of indifference or forgetfulness of God. Like the first apostles, you too are called to be disciples and to *make disciples of others* among your families, friends and community.

You are a very vital part of the future of humanity in God. To keep alive this hope you can rely on prayer, both in private and at Church in public worship, to show you the path which God wishes you to follow in life.

To those engaged in youth work, especially the representatives from the *Catholic schools*, I offer

every encouragement and support. Yours is the *truly noble task* of helping young Catholics to grow in their faith and of forming them, and others too, in Christian living and virtue.

6. On Pentecost Day, at the beginning of the Church's pilgrimage towards the future of humanity in God, we know that *Mary was in the Upper Room in Jerusalem*. Though she did not receive the apostles' apostolic mission, the example of her heroic faith and witness to the mystery of Christ *precedes* the witness of the Church in every land and nation.

Here, at Øm, where Mary is honoured by the Catholics of Jutland and Funen, *let us look to her*,

- who by faith brought forth Christ into the world through the power of the Holy Spirit;
- who “in hope believed against hope” (*Rom. 4, 18*) at the foot of the Cross;
- who in the centuries since Pentecost remains “devoted in prayer” with all her Son's disciples;
- who is present in the Church's work of *introducing into the world the Kingdom of God*.

Holy Mary, Mother of Divine Love, intercede for us with your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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