



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND BEATIFICATION OF FATHER WINCENTY FRELICHOWSKI

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Torun

Monday, 7 June 1999

1. *“Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation, have mercy on us”*

We bow in faith before the great mystery of the love of the Divine Heart and we give it honour and glory. Hail, O Jesus; hail, O Heart Divine of the Son of Man, which has so loved us men and women.

I give thanks to God for granting today that I should visit this young Diocese of Torun and that I should, together with you, praise the Most Sacred Heart of the Saviour. With joy I thank Divine Providence for the gift of a new Blessed, the priest and martyr Stefan Wincenty Frelichowski, heroic witness to the love of which a pastor is capable. I cordially greet all those present at this month of June celebration. In a special way I greet Bishop Andrzej, Pastor of the Church of Torun, his Auxiliary Jan, the clergy, consecrated men and women and all the People of God in this land. I greet Torun, a city dear to my heart, and beautiful Pomerania on the Vistula. I am pleased to be in your city made famous by one of the world’s greatest astronomers, Nicolaus Copernicus. Torun is also known because of the efforts for peace undertaken in the course of history. In fact, on two occasions peace treaties were concluded here, treaties which history has dubbed the Peace of Torun. It was also in this city that there took place the meeting of Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist representatives which received the name *Colloquium Charitativum*, that is, the “Fraternal Colloquium”. Here the words of the Psalmist take on a particular eloquence: “For my brethren and companions’ sake I will say, ‘Peace be within you!’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good” (*Ps 122, 8-9*).

2. *“Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation”*

This is the Heart of the Saviour — the tangible sign of his invincible love and the inexhaustible source of true peace. In him “the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily” (*Col 2:9*). The peace that

Christ brought to earth comes precisely from this Fulness and from this Love. It is the gift of a God who loves, who has loved mankind in the Heart of the Only-Begotten Son. "He is our peace" (cf. *Eph 2:14*), exclaims Saint Paul. Yes, Jesus is peace, he is our reconciliation. He was the one who put an end to the enmity which arose after man had sinned, and who reconciled all people with the Father through his Death on the Cross. On Golgotha Jesus' Heart was pierced by a lance as a sign of his total self-giving, of that sacrificial and saving love with which he "loved us to the end" (cf. *Jn 13:1*), laying the foundation of the friendship between God and man.

This is why the peace of Christ is different from the peace envisaged by the world. In the Upper Room before his Death, speaking to the Apostles, Jesus stated clearly: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (*Jn 14:27*). While men understand peace primarily at the temporal and external level, Christ says that it springs from supernatural gifts, it is the result of union with God in love.

The Church lives ceaselessly by the Gospel of peace. She proclaims it to all peoples and nations. Tirelessly she indicates the paths of peace and reconciliation. She ushers in peace by breaking down the walls of prejudice and hostility between people. She does this first of all through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation: bringing the grace of divine mercy and of forgiveness, she arrives at the very roots of human suffering, she heals consciences wounded by sin so that the person experiences inner comfort and becomes a peacemaker. The Church also shares the peace that she herself experiences every day in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the culmination of our peace. In it is accomplished the sacrifice of reconciliation with God and with our brothers and sisters, in it resounds the word of God announcing peace, in it is raised without end the prayer: "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us". In the Eucharist we receive the gift of Christ himself, who offers himself and becomes our peace. So, with particular clarity we experience the fact that the world cannot give this peace, for it does not know this peace (cf. *Jn 14:27*).

We praise today the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ; the peace that he gave to all those who met him during his earthly life. The peace with which he joyously greeted the disciples after his Resurrection.

3. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9).*

This is what Christ tells us in the Sermon on the Mount. From the depths of his Heart filled with love he expresses his desire for our happiness. Christ knows that our greatest happiness is union with God, which makes us sons and daughters of God. Among the paths that lead to fulness of happiness, he indicates the one that involves working on behalf of peace and sharing peace with others. Men and women of peace are worthy of being called children of God. Jesus calls such people "blessed".

“Blessed are the peacemakers”. The dignity of such a designation rightly belongs to Father Stefan Wincenty Frelichowsky, raised today to the glory of the altars. His whole life, in fact, is a kind of mirror reflecting the light of that teaching of Christ according to which true happiness is attained only by those who, in union with God, become men and women of peace, peacemakers who bring peace to others. This priest of Torun, whose pastoral service lasted less than eight years, offered a very clear witness of his giving himself to God and to others. Drawing his sustenance from God, from the very first years of his priesthood, with the wealth of his priestly charism he went wherever the grace of salvation needed to be brought. He learned the secrets of the human heart and adapted pastoral methods to the needs of every person he met. He had picked up this ability from the school of Scouting where he had acquired a particular sensitivity to the needs of others, a sensitivity which he constantly developed in the spirit of the parable of the Good Shepherd who searches out the lost sheep and is ready to give his own life to save them (cf. *Jn* 10:1-21). As a priest he was always aware of being a witness of a great Cause, and at the same time he gave himself with deep humility to the service of others. Thanks to his goodness, meekness and patience he won many souls over to Christ, even in the tragic circumstances of the War and the Occupation.

During the tragedy of the war his life was like a written record, one chapter following another, of service on behalf of peace. The so-called Fort Seven, then Stutthoff, Grenzdorf, Oranienburgo-Sachsenhausen, and finally Dachau are the list of stations on a path of suffering, but a path on which he was always the same: courageous in fulfilling his priestly ministry. He would minister especially to those who were most in need of his services, to those who were part of the masses dying of typhoid, to which he himself fell victim. He gave his priestly life to God and to others, bringing peace to the victims of war. He generously shared peace with others because his soul drew strength from the peace of Christ. And that strength was so great that not even death as a martyr was able to crush it.

4. Dear Brothers and Sisters, without inner renewal and without a commitment to overcome evil and sin in our hearts, and especially without love, man will never achieve inner peace. Such peace will be lasting only when it is rooted in the highest values, when it is based on moral norms and is open to God. Otherwise, when built on the shifting sands of religious indifference and arid pragmatism, it can only be short-lived. Inner peace comes to birth in the human heart and in the life of society as a result of moral order, ethical order, the observance of God’s commandments.

Let us share this peace of God with others, as did the Blessed priest and martyr Wincenty Frelichowsky. Thus we will become a source of peace in the world, in society, in the environment in which we live and work. I make this appeal to everyone without exception, and particularly to you, dear priests. Be witnesses of God’s merciful love! Proclaim joyfully the Gospel of Christ, dispensing God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Through your service seek to bring everyone closer to Christ, the giver of peace.

I also address these words to you, dear parents, who are the first educators of your children. Be for them an image of love and divine forgiveness, striving with all your might to build a united and harmonious family. In fact, it is the family that has been entrusted with a mission of primary importance: to participate in the building of peace, of the well-being that is indispensable for development and for the respect of human life.

I ask you, educators, who are called to impart authentic life values to the younger generations: teach children and young people tolerance, understanding and respect for every human being; educate the younger generations in a climate of true peace. It is their right. It is your duty.

You, young people, who cherish great hopes in your hearts, learn to live in harmony and mutual respect, lending assistance by your solidarity with others. Sustain in your hearts the aspiration to good works and the desire for peace (cf. *Message for the 1997 World Day of Peace*, 8).

Societies and nations need men and women of peace, authentic sowers of harmony and mutual respect; men and women who fill their own hearts with Christ's peace and bring this peace to their homes, offices, institutions, workplaces, to the entire world. Both history and the events of our own day show that the world cannot give peace. The world is powerless. That is why it is necessary to point to Jesus Christ, who by his Death on the Cross has left his peace to mankind, assuring us of his presence for all times (cf. *Jn 14:7-31*). How much innocent blood has been shed in the Twentieth Century, in Europe and throughout the world, because certain political and social systems forsook the principles of Christ that guarantee a just peace. How much innocent blood is being shed under our very eyes. These last few months have demonstrated this in a tragic way. We are witnesses to how strongly people cry out for and yearn for peace.

I speak these words in a land that in its history experienced the tragic effects of the lack of peace, having been victim of a cruel and ruinous war. Our memory of the Second World War is still vivid, the wounds inflicted by that cataclysm of history will need much time to be completely healed. May the cry for peace spread out from this place to the entire world! I wish to repeat the words I spoke this year in the Easter *Urbi et Orbi* message: "Peace is possible, peace is a duty, peace is a prime responsibility of everyone! May the dawn of the Third Millennium see the coming of a new era in which respect for every man and woman and fraternal solidarity among peoples will, with God's help, overcome the culture of hatred, of violence, of death".

With deep gratitude we welcome the witness of the life of Blessed Wincenty Frelichowski — a modern-day hero, priest and man of peace — as a call to our generation. I wish to entrust the gift of this Beatification in a particular way to the Church in Torun, so that she may preserve and make known on an ever wider scale the memory of the great works which God accomplished in the short life of this priest. I entrust this gift above all to the priests of this Diocese and of all Poland. Father Frelichowski, at the beginning of his priestly journey, wrote: "I must be a priest after the Heart of Christ". If this Beatification is a great act of thanksgiving to God for his priesthood, it is also an act

of praise to God for the marvels of grace which are accomplished through the hands of all priests, through your hands too. I wish to address a few words also to the family of Polish scouts, with whom the Blessed shared a profound bond. May he become your Patron, teaching you nobility of spirit and interceding for peace and reconciliation.

In just a few days it will be the hundredth anniversary of the consecration of humanity to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. This took place in all Dioceses through the work of Pope Leo XIII, who, to that end, published the Encyclical *Annum Sacrum*. In that Encyclical he wrote: "The Divine Heart is the symbol and living image of Jesus Christ's infinite love, which invites us to respond in turn with love" (No. 2). A little while ago we renewed together the act of consecration to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. We thus expressed our utmost homage and our faith in Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (*Rev 21:6*), to him belong this world and its destiny.

Today, in adoring the Sacred Heart, let us pray fervently for peace. First of all for peace in our hearts, but also for peace in our families, in our nation and in all the world.

Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation, have mercy on us!