



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND

MEETING WITH THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY OF WARSAW GATHERED IN THE CATHEDRAL OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Warsaw, 2 June 1979 Praised be Jesus Christ! At the start of my pilgrimage through Poland I greet the Church of Warsaw gathered in its Cathedral. I greet the Capital and the Archdiocese. I greet this Church in the person of its Bishop, the Primate of Poland. Saint Ignatius of Antioch gave expression, even in that early time, to the unity that the Church attains in its Bishop. The teaching of this great apostolic Father and martyr passed into Tradition. It was echoed amply and forcefully in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council. This teaching has found a magnificent incarnation in this very place, in Warsaw, in the Church in Warsaw. For the Cardinal Primate has become a special keystone of that unity. A keystone is what forms the arch, what reflects the strength of the foundations of the building. The Cardinal Primate *shows the strength of the foundation of the Church, which is Jesus Christ*. This is what his strength consists of. The Cardinal Primate as been teaching for over thirty years that *he owes this strength to Mary*, the Mother of Christ. We all know well that it is possible, thanks to Mary, to make the strength of the foundation that is Christ shine out, and effectively to become a keystone of the Church. This is taught by the life and ministry of the Primate of Poland. He is the keystone of the Church of Warsaw and the keystone of all the Church of Poland. This is what constitutes the providential mission that he has been performing for more than thirty years. I wish to give expression to this at the beginning of my pilgrimage, here in the Capital of Poland, and I also desire to give thanks for it, together with all the Church and the nation, to the Most Holy Trinity. For, in all her aspects of time and space, of geography and history, *the Church is gathered in the unity of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit*, as the Council too reminds us (*Lumen Gentium*, 4).² So, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, I wish to greet all those who constitute this Church in communion with their Bishop, the Primate of Poland. The Bishops — the aged Bishop Wlclaw, Bishop Jerzy, Bishop Bronislaw, Secretary of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Bishop Wladislaw and Bishop Zbigniew. The Metropolitan Chapter,
All the diocesan and regular clergy and the religious Brothers,

The Sisters of all the Congregations,

The Seminary,

The Ecclesiastical Academic Institution that is the continuation of the Theology Faculty of the University of Warsaw. I wish also, in union with the Archbishop of the Church of Warsaw, *to see and embrace in the fullest way the whole of the community of the People of God represented by almost three million laypeople*. The Church is present "in the world" through the laity. I wish therefore to embrace all of you who constitute the pilgrim Church on earth, in the land of Poland, in Warsaw, in Mazowsze. Fathers and Mothers.

You who are lonely.

Young People and Children. You who are old. All of you who work on the land, in industry, in offices, in schools, in universities, in hospitals, in cultural institutes, in the ministries, everywhere. Members of all the professions who by your work are building the Poland of today, the heritage of so many generations, a well-loved heritage, a difficult heritage, a great commitment, our "great community duty" as Poles, the Motherland (C. K. Norwid). *All of you who are at the same time the Church*, this Church of Warsaw. You who are confirming the thousand-year-old right of citizenship that this Church has in the present-day life of the Capital, of the nation, of the State.³ In union with the Church of the Archdiocese I also greet *all* the Bishops who are suffragans of the Metropolitan of Warsaw: the Ordinaries of Lodz, of Sandomierz, of Lublin, of Siedlce, of Warmia and of Plock, with their Auxiliary Bishops and those who have come to represent the Dioceses.⁴ The Cathedral of Warsaw, dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, was almost completely destroyed during the Rising. The one we are now in is a completely new building. It is also a sign of new Polish and Catholic life, having its centre in the Cathedral. It is a sign of what Christ once said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19). Beloved brothers and sisters. Dear fellow-countrymen. You know that I am coming here to Poland for the ninth centenary of the martyrdom of Saint Stanislaus. He is the principal Patron of the Archdiocese of Warsaw. I am therefore beginning my veneration of him here, in Warsaw, at the first stopping place in my jubilee pilgrimage. He once occupied the bishopric of Krakow, which for centuries was the capital of Poland, and it seems that he once said of himself to King Boleslaw: "Destroy this Church, *and Christ, over the generations, will rebuild it*". "He spoke of the temple of his body" (Jn 2:21). Within this sign of the new building and the new life that is Christ and belongs to Christ, I am today meeting you, dearly beloved, and I greet you as the first Pope from the Polish race, on the threshold of the second Millennium of the Nation's Baptism and history. "Christ... will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom 6:9).

