



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO POLAND (MAY 31-JUNE 10, 1997)

VISIT TO THE PARISH OF ST HEDWIG QUEEN

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Krakow - 9 June 1997

1. "I rejoiced when I heard them say: 'Let us go to God's house'" (Ps 122:1).

I repeat this confession of the Psalmist here today, in this church and in this parish community. I too rejoiced when the programme of this pilgrimage was drawn up and I was told that we would "go to God's house" - to this house in Krowdrza, of which Saint Hedwig Queen is Patroness. I longed to come back to this place where in 1974, as Metropolitan of Krakow, I celebrated Holy Mass for the first time on the occasion of the opening of the school year. I remember this square and that little house, which was at one and the same time the place for catechesis and the centre of the new parish. There was still no church; there was not even permission to build one. But there was another Church, the Church made of living stones with Christ as its foundation. There was the community of the faithful, that used to gather in the open air, putting up with every inconvenience, in order to celebrate the Eucharist, to hear the word of God, to go to confession, to pray. . . The faithful were also united in a great wish to see a church, the Lord's house, and also a house for future generations of confessors, in this place, in the midst of the buildings that were going up in this district. They spared no efforts or sacrifices, and they achieved what is here today. Through the designs of Divine Providence, today I can enter this temple in order to thank God, precisely here, with you, for the gift of the holiness of Queen Hedwig, whom it was granted to me to canonize yesterday.

2. Joining you in this act of thanksgiving, I wish to greet the local pastors, and in the first place

Monsignor Jan who, from the beginning, by disposition of the then Archbishop of Krakow, now the Successor of Peter, organized the life of this parish. I greet the community of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, who from the very first years of the existence of the parish have helped the priests in catechetical, charitable and liturgical activities. Then I wish to embrace in my heart all of you who are present and the whole parish community which you represent. I know that it is a lively community, which irradiates the spirit of faith and devotion, and is greatly concerned for people, for their development, not only their spiritual but also their cultural and material development. The life of the parish is articulated in numerous groups and communities of prayer, liturgy, assistance, culture and sports. . . All can find a place here to broaden their interests, as well as to deepen their faith. And this is an activity worthy of recognition. As the Psalmist says: "The sparrow herself finds a home, and the swallow a nest. . . by your altars, Lord of hosts, my king and my God" (Ps 83:4). These words clearly set out the direction of the life and activity of the parish community. Everything that happens in it should take place "by the altars"; it should lead to the altar. The life of the communities that work in the parish - both those directly connected with the liturgy or catechesis or prayer, and those that promote culture and sport - is truly fruitful and truly builds up the individual if it leads him to Christ, to the Christ who offers himself on the altar in sacrifice to the Father and gives himself totally to man in order to sanctify him. My wish for the pastors, the Religious, and all the People of God of this parish and all the parish communities of the Church in Poland is that your faithful perseverance at the side of Christ present in the Eucharist will bear fruits of happiness in the life of each one of you. "They are happy who dwell in your house, for ever singing your praise" (Ps 83:5).

3. From this church I look out on Krakow, my beloved city. I hold in my memory all its districts, all the parishes that I used to visit as Pastor of the Archdiocese. Since then there have been built dozens of new churches which at that time existed only in the desires and projects of the Archbishop. It has been given to my successor to bring them into being and to bless them. I thank Divine Providence for all the new parishes in Krakow and Nowa Huta which already exist or which, thanks to the goodwill of the local authorities, are being built where they are needed. I embrace all of them in my heart and in my prayer.

I entrust to the loving protection of Saint Hedwig Queen those of you who are present, your parish and all the parishes of Poland, and I cordially bless you all.