



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Nowy Targ, 8 June 1979

1. "From the Baltic Sea *to the mountain peaks...*" *To the peaks of the Tatra.*

In my pilgrimage through Poland, I have occasion today to come near to those mountains, the Tatra Mountains, that for centuries have constituted the southern frontier of Poland. This has been the most closed and most shielded frontier, and at the same time the most open and friendly one. Across this frontier passed *the roads towards neighbours, towards like cultures*. Even during the last occupation these roads were the ones most often taken by the refugees going south, trying to reach the Polish army, which was fighting for the freedom of the homeland beyond its borders.

With all my heart I wish to greet these places to which I have always been so closely bound. I also wish to greet all those who have come here, both from Podhale and from the lower Carpathians, from the Archdiocese of Krakow and from even further: from the Dioceses of Tarnow and Przemysl. Permit me to appeal to the ancient bond of being neighbours and to greet you all, just as I was accustomed to do when I was Metropolitan of Krakow.

2. Here, in this place at Nowy Targ, I wish to speak *of the Polish land*, because here it shows itself particularly beautiful and rich in landscapes. Man needs the beauty of nature, and so it is not surprising that people come here from various parts of Poland and from abroad. They come both in summer and in winter. They seek rest. *They want to find themselves again through contact with nature*. They want to rebuild their energies through the wholesome physical exercise of walking, climbing and skiing. This hospitable region is also a land of great pastoral work, because people come here to regain not only their physical strength but their spiritual strength too.

3. This beautiful land is at the same time a difficult land. Rocky, mountainous. Not as fertile as the

plain of the Vistula. And so permit me, precisely from this land of the lower Carpathians and the lower Tatra, to make reference to something that has always been very dear to the heart of the Poles: *a love for the land and work in the fields*. No one can deny that this represents not only a feeling, an affective bond, but also a great social and economic problem. These parts are especially well acquainted with the problem, because it was precisely from these places, where there was the greatest lack of cultivable soil and sometimes great poverty, that people emigrated far way, beyond Poland, beyond the seas. There they sought work and bread, and they found it. Today I wish to say to all those people scattered throughout the world, wherever they may be: "Szczesc Boze"—May God assist you! Let them not forget their country of origin, family, Church, prayer and everything they took from here. Because even though they had to emigrate for lack of material goods, yet they took with them from here a great spiritual heritage. Let them take care that while they become rich materially they do not become spiritually impoverished: neither they, not their children, nor their grandchildren.

This is the great and fundamental right of man: *the right to work and the right to the land*. Although economic development may take us in another direction, although one may value progress based upon industrialization, although the generation of today may leave en masse the land and agricultural work, still the right to the land does not cease to form the foundation of a sound economy and sociology.

During my visit it is only right that I offer some good wishes, and I therefore express to my native land my heartfelt wish that what *has always constituted the strength of the Polish people—even during the most arduous periods of history—namely the personal bond with the land*, may not cease to be so even in our industrialized generation. Hold in great esteem the work of the fields; appreciate it and value it! And may Poland never want for bread and food!

4. This good wish is united to another. The Creator has given the earth to man so that "he may subdue" it—and upon this dominion of man over the earth he based *man's fundamental right to life*. This right is closely bound up with man's vocation to family life and to procreation. "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Just as the earth, by the providential decree of the Creator, bears fruit, so too this union in the love of two persons: man and woman, bears fruit in a new human life. Of this *lifegiving unity of persons* the Creator made the first sacrament, and the Redeemer confirmed this never-ending sacrament of love and of life, giving it a new dignity and impressing on it the seal of its holiness. Man's right to life is linked, by the will of the Creator and in virtue of the Cross of Christ, *to the indissoluble sacrament of matrimony*.

And so, beloved fellow-Countrymen, on this visit of mine I express the wish that this sacred right may not cease to form the life of the Polish land; both here, in the lower Tatra, in the lower Carpathians, and everywhere. It is rightly said that the family is the fundamental cell of social life. It is the fundamental human community. *As goes the family, so goes the nation, because such is man*. So I express the wish that you may be strong, thanks to families deeply rooted in the

strength of God, and I express the wish that man may be able to develop fully on the basis of the indissoluble bond of spouses who are parents, in the family atmosphere that nothing can replace. Again I express the wish and I always pray for this, *that the Polish family may beget life and may be faithful to the sacred right to life*. If man's right to life is violated at the moment in which he is first conceived in his mother's womb, an indirect blow is struck also at the whole of the moral order, which serves to ensure the inviolable goods of man. Among those goods, life occupies the first place. The Church defends the right to life, not only in regard to the majesty of the Creator, who is the First Giver of this life, but also *in respect to the essential good of man*.

5. I also wish to speak to the young people, who love these places in a special way and seek here not only physical but also spiritual rest. "To rest," once wrote Norwid, "means 'to begin anew'" (a play on words in Polish). Man's spiritual rest, *as many groups of young people* correctly realize, must lead to discovering and working out in oneself that "new creature" that Saint Paul speaks of. To this end leads the path of the Word of God, read and celebrated with faith and love, participation in the Sacraments and especially in the Eucharist. To this end leads the way of understanding and realization of community, that is, the communion with people that stems from Eucharistic Communion, and also the understanding and realization of evangelical service, that is, of diaconia. Dear friends, do not give up that noble effort that enables you to become witnesses to Christ. A witness, in biblical language, means "martyr".

I entrust you to the Immaculate Virgin, to whom Blessed Maximilian Kolbe continually entrusted the whole world.

I entrust everyone to the Mother of Christ who reigns not far from here as 'Mother in her shrine at Ludmierz, and also in that shrine that rises in the heart of the Tatra at Rusinowa Polana (how much the Servant of God, Brother Albert loved that place, how much he admired and loved it from his hermitage at Kalatowki), and in many other shrines built at the foot of the Carpathians, in the Dioceses of Tarnow and Przemysl—to the East and to the West. And in the whole land of Poland. May the heritage of the faith of Christ and of the moral order be guarded by Saint Stanislaus, Bishop and martyr, patron of the Poles, witness to Christ for so many centuries in our native land.

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