



The Holy See

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

HOLY MASS AT THE GLOBE STADIUM

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Stockholm (Sweden)
Thursday, 8 June 1989

We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God (Act. 2, 11).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. On Pentecost day, the apostles who had gathered together in the Upper Room in Jerusalem “were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (*Ibid.* 2, 4). A sound was heard “like the rush of a mighty wind” (*Ibid.* 2, 2), and over the heads of those present there appeared “tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” (*Ibid.* 2, 3). Among these miraculous signs, however, one is *especially striking*. We are told that nearby there were many people from different lands of the Mediterranean world and the Near East, each of whom *heard the apostles speaking in his own tongue*. What united these various languages was the truth spoken by the apostles under the influence of the Spirit, the Paraclete. It was the truth of “the mighty works of God”.

This event is the most important sign of “the miracle of Pentecost”. It *shows the Church* in her unity: a unity that embraces diversity and that is verified in diversity. The variety of languages represents “every nation under heaven” (*Act.* 2, 5) to which the apostles were sent by Christ when he ascended from this world to the Father. *Arising from the foundation of the apostolic witness to the Crucified and Risen Christ, the Church will always be a unity in diversity.*

2. [Text in Swedish]

Mina kära bröder och systrar!

Det är en stor glädje för mig att få vara här i Globen. Från hela Sverige och från många delar av världen har ni kommit för att närvara idag. Ni har samlats som Guds folk, som bröder och systrar i Kristus för att inspirerade av den helige Ande fira mässen tillsammans. Må Herren vara med oss i detta firande och må vi genom hans moderns förböner komma närmare den ende sanne Guden.

Jag vill vända mig till det svenska folket som så varmt har tagit emot många människor från olika delar av världen och till de svenska katolikerna, som är grundstenarna i den katolska kyrkan i Sverige. Jag hälsar också representanterna för den Kungliga Familjen, för regeringen, Svenska kyrkan, de olika fria samfundet, Svenska Ekumeniska Nämnden och den diplomatiska koren.

To the many of you who are immigrants I offer a special greeting in the Lord: *Peace be with you.*

La paz esté con vosotros

La pace sia con voi

A Paz esteja convosco

Mir s vama

Béke veletek!

Bình an o cùng anh chi em

Pokój Wam!

[Text in Spanish]

Quiero dirigir un saludo especial a los españoles y a los latinoamericanos aquí presentes que han encontrado en Suecia su nuevo país. Os animo a mantener vuestra fe y a compartir con vuestros amigos los valores cristianos permanentes que vosotros vivís en vuestra vida familiar.

[Text in Croatian]

Mir s vama! Dragim mojim Hrvatima srdačan pozdrav i vama izseljenicima! Našli u Švedsko j svoj dom i ostanite vjerni vjeri otaca i Crkve, što je časni dio vaše stoljetne kulture i kršćanstva.

[Text in Polish]

Pokój wam!

Zwracam się do moich rodaków z tym pozdrowieniem Chrystusa Zmartwychwstałego: Pokój wam! Jest to pozdrowienie liturgii Kościoła. Zwracam się w tych słowach do was tu obecnych, do

wszystkich, którzy znajdują się na szlaku moich odwiedzin i do wszystkich, którzy żyją w Szwecji, a także w innych krajach skandynawskich.

Moi drodzy Bracia i Siostry! Obraliście ten kraj jako drugą ojczyznę dla was, dla waszych dzieci i wouków. Stanowicie już część tego społeczeństwa, w które stopniowo wchodzicie, i stanowicie część Kościoła na tych ziemiach. Jesteście – razem z innymi braćmi i siostrami – tym Kościołem! Jest to Kościół mały, jak owo ewangeliczne ziarno gorczyczne. Składa się przeważnie z przybyszów.

Losy tego Kościoła w bliskim już trzecim tysiącleciu, zależą także od was. Nosicie w sobie milenijne dziedzictwo ochrzczonego narodu. Owoc łaski, ofiary, modlitwy, cierpienia oraz zwycięstw naszych przodków, a także naszego pokolenia. Pamiętajcie o tych, którzy żyją w Polsce – pamiętajcie i tę świadomość przekazujcie młodemu pokoleniu.

Nie czujcie się opuszczeni. Odbudowujcie i budujcie wasze życie w oparciu o to, co wam tu ofiarowują. Współpracujcie w tworzeniu i pomnażaniu wspólnego dobra tego kraju. W ten sposób także przysłużycie się naszej Ojczyźnie nad Wisłą.

Budujcie jedność Kościoła, budujcie jego przyszłość. Pokój Chrystusa Zmartwychwstałego niech będzie z wami: w waszych sercach i myślach, w waszych rodzinach i środowiskach, w całym społeczeństwie.

To kładę na wasze serca i sumienia, jako ludzkie i chrześcijańskie powołanie oraz odpowiedzialność.

Takie też jest moje najlepsze życzenie dla was wszystkich, tu zgromadzonych, i dla wszystkich Polaków w Szwecji i w Skandynawii. Serdecznie was błogosławię.

All of you who are immigrants can be grateful that your Swedishborn brothers and sisters have welcomed you in a true spirit of Christian fellowship and love. What is needed now is for *all Catholics in Sweden to work together for the common good* of the Church. The one Body of Christ must be built up out of the rich diversity of Swedish culture and the new contributions of the various ethnic groups. The diversity of the Church is that of nations, peoples, cultures and social groups in different periods of history; our unity is a *“mighty work of God”, the work of truth, which is also the source of new life for man.*

3. The readings of today’s liturgy contrast two events: *Pentecost* in Jerusalem, which marks the birth of the Church, and the *biblical Tower of Babel*, which is described in the Book of Genesis. The Tower of *Babel symbolizes the disintegration of unity*, humanity’s loss of a common language. Unity had given way to division. Pentecost, on the other hand, symbolizes *a new search for unity in diversity and through diversity*. We see that differences of language need not lead to the

scattering of humanity. Amid the variety of tongues we can attain *unity when people are united in the truth*, and above all when they are united in an awareness of “the mighty works of God”.

These “mighty works” reveal to us the great mystery of *communion within God*, a communion which is the ultimate source of our unity with one another. Through Christ we come to know that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are *a Trinity of divine persons, united in one nature* from all eternity. It is precisely this communion of persons which *is the primary source and model* for the Church.

Quoting Saint Cyprian, the Second Vatican Council says that the universal Church is “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (*Lumen Gentium*, 4). We see this in Christ’s prayer in the Upper Room on the eve of his Passion: “That they may all be *one*; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that *they also* may be *in us*, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (*Jo.* 17, 21). Communion with God and with one another is therefore the ultimate vocation of the Church. It is *an invitation* addressed to Christians in every age in the midst of their historical divisions.

This call to unity also extends *to the whole human family*. The division and antagonisms symbolized by the Tower of Babel must be overcome within the temporal order too. Unity must be built out of the rich diversity of the human race so that *the invitation of Pentecost may triumph in history*. For the “*mighty works of God*” not only give rise to the Church; they are also *inscribed deep within man and in all of his work*.

4. Today’s liturgy shows *how each of us and indeed every Christian* must respond to the invitation of Pentecost and act upon it. In the Gospel *Christ speaks of this through the images* of “salt” and “light”. His words to his followers are also addressed to us, the disciples of today: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” (*Matth.* 5, 13-14). Light is needed *so that “the mighty works of God”* can be seen. We need the “enlightened eyes of faith” (Cfr. *Eph.* 1, 18) to see these works *within the depths of our personal “I”*. The light of apostolic testimony is also necessary, so that “the things of God” *can be seen*. We need these things can speak to people, enter their minds and hearts and “give light to all” (Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 15). The “salt of the earth” is also needed. *Salt signifies consistency between faith and works*. It signifies an inner Christian unity. It signifies the spiritual maturity of those born from an awareness of “the mighty works of God”.

The images of salt and light *apply to each of us as individuals*. They refer to the fundamental diversity of the Church and of the human family, which embraces a variety of persons. In the end, diversity is determined by the fact that every individual’s life is unique and unrepeatable. At the same time each of us is called to *be salt and light “for others” and “with others”* so that unity will be built out of diversity, so that people will join together, so that the life of the Church and of the human community will take on a likeness to the unity which is God himself: the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. The “mighty works of God” not only call us to faith in God and obedience to his law; they also reveal the greatness of man, *the dignity and transcendent vocation of every human person*. Love of God and neighbour is what makes us “salt” and “light”. This love is the true measure of all human development for the individual and for society.

Dear brothers and sisters: we must never allow material things to take precedence over God or other human beings. No human theory, project or purpose can ever be pursued *at the cost of the loving obedience we owe to God and the loving respect we owe to others*.

No economic or technological consideration should be the decisive norm for the way that we treat others. This applies to every human person: to the unborn child, to the elderly, to the sick and dying, to the poor, to those who are different from us because of race or culture.

Those of you who have come to Sweden from other countries may have experienced material poverty before settling here. The abundance of goods in your new homeland may dazzle you. Always remember that these things are *valuable only to the extent that they serve the true good of the human person*, both spiritually and materially. Once they become an end in themselves, or their true worth is lost sight of, you can easily be tempted to act as though people were only “things”. Keep Christ’s words before you always: “What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and then lose his own life?” (*Matth. 16, 26*).

6. The “invitation of Pentecost” and the vocation to be “salt” and “light” for the world also commit us to solidarity with others. Sweden has a well-deserved reputation for assisting developing countries and for promoting greater justice and peace in the human family. *The Tower of Babel must give way to a common search for world solutions* to poverty, hunger, disease, to intolerance, injustice and persecution, to violence and war, and to environmental problems. The fact that so many nationalities are represented here today – native Swedes as well as refugees and workers who have been welcomed here – shows that it is possible *to live and work together*.

Solidarity also calls you to promote the common good of the country and local community in which you live. Catholics and Christians of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities should be active in transforming society from within through love of God and neighbour. This requires their *full participation in the social, political and cultural life of Sweden*, as well as in the economic sphere, in particular the trade unions and employers’ organizations. Not only native-born Swedes but *also immigrants* need to take their proper place in society so that they too can make a positive contribution to the country to which they now belong.

We cannot speak of solidarity in the modern community without also mentioning *family life*. This is so because “it is within the family that citizens find *the first school of the social virtues* that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Familiaris Consortio*, 42). It is not always easy today for married couples to live in a lifelong

covenant marked by mutual *fidelity, respect and love*. Nor is it always easy for Christian parents to bring up their children in the faith, teaching them – in a word – to love God above all things and to love others as themselves.

We must be ever more deeply convinced that *the future of humanity comes by way of the family*. Everyone should feel the need to preserve and foster the values and requirements of the family. This is especially important for the sons and daughters of the Church. Faith gives us full knowledge of God’s wonderful plan. We therefore have an extra reason to promote family life in this time of grace and challenge (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Familiaris Consortio*, 86).

7. Dear brothers and sisters, in order to accept the “invitation of Pentecost”, in order to be “salt” and “light” in bearing witness to the unity of the human race, we must *live the “mighty works of God”*. We do this through prayer and our reception of the sacraments, especially *Penance and the Eucharist*, through the example of a *holy life, through self-sacrifice and active charity* (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 10).

In this way “*the miracle of Pentecost*” abides and grows here among you, the beloved sons and daughters of Sweden:

The “mighty works of God” draw near.
 They touch the human heart.
 They form the Church.
 They serve the good of the human community.

And the prayer of Christ is thus fulfilled: Father, may they all be one, so that the world may believe (Cfr. *Io.* 17, 21). Amen.

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