



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AL SIGNOR JERZY KUBERSKI, AMBASCIATORE DELLA
REPUBBLICA POPOLARE DI POLONIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Giovedì, 5 ottobre 1989

Mr. Ambassador,

1. This is a significant moment, a historic moment. Diplomatic relations are being re-established between the Holy See and Poland, which means a full normalization of reciprocal relations between the State and the Church in our country. This is demonstrated, among other things, by the law of 17 May 1989 on the attitude of the State towards the Church in the Peoples' Republic of Poland, and likewise by the mutual will to establish a convention, that is an important document of international character, in the near future. Contributing to the further increase of my joy, that of the Holy See, of the Church, and I suppose, that of the whole Polish nation, is the fact that this solemn and official act confirms, and in a certain way seals, the beginning of a great good which has appeared on the horizon of our history, a good which for decades has never ceased to be the object of the aspirations of the sons and daughters of our native land, the majority of whom have been, for more than a millennium, sons and daughters of the Church.

The good of which I speak is the creation of the conditions in which man, each of his social groups, the various milieus in which he lives, and the nation as a whole can realize themselves and the common good in accordance with their proper vocation, conscience and sensibility in freedom and in respect for one another's human dignity. This is a true gift of God, planned, according to what the Church believes, in the act of creation, and carried to its fullness in the mystery of the Redemption.

2. This is why, on the inaugural day of my pontificate, I exclaimed in St Peter's Square: «help... all who wish to serve Christ... man and all humanity! Have no fear! Open... State borders, economic as well as political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and progress» (22 October 1978).

And in taking leave of my country, after my first pastoral visit, I said: «this journey has certainly been an act of courage on both sides. However, for our times, such an act of courage is necessary. We need to have the courage to walk in a direction that no one before has yet taken» (Address at Balice Airport in Krakow, 10 June 1979).

3. Today Poland is once again the country of courage and of events which have prophetic impact above all for those parts of the world where human beings are still suffering, where particular social groups or groups which confess the same religion suffer, where there is no general agreement regarding that good which is the human person himself, his dignity and the things produced by him and indispensable to him so that he can be in the image and likeness of God.

There were not lacking in our country moments of regression and collapse. The nation has not been spared the sufferings, humiliations and tears which in the Church fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col 1:24) and which, with the power of his Resurrection, have become the source of victory and joy.

And there were not lacking on both sides people who, sometimes against hope, were striving patiently to confer a new form on the country and on society. For this I am grateful to Divine Providence. I thank also all those who have had the courage to think and to act in a manner proportionate to the dangers and to the historic tasks. Polish society has come a long way in the course of the last decades, and the Church has played an important role here.

There is still a long and difficult way to go. Grave tasks remain to be carried out. We will need great sacrifices, much wisdom, patience, and once again, courage.

I share with the whole nation the joy for what is new, great and much desired. With you I share the fears, and I place the entire promising future, through the intercession of the Queen of Poland, in the hands of the almighty and merciful God. I have confidence in the unfathomable spiritual resources and in the universal capacities of my compatriots, in their wisdom which has been tested in the course of history, in their fidelity to their own tradition, and in their creative faculties which enable them not only to survive, but to be reborn ever anew. There is no other way but that of renewal. Every step back-ward would bode ill for the world of today. So I repeat today to my compatriots the words of the Apostle: «Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that if I should come and see you... I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit... Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others» (Phil 1:27; 2:4).

4. Mr. Ambassador, through the mandate of the President of Poland you are performing the historic act of placing in my hands your Letters of Credence.

In a short while, the Representative of the Holy See will perform the same act in Warsaw. All this

is taking place almost exactly fifty years after the departure of the last Nuncio and the end of his mission in Poland, caused by the Second World War and by its consequences.

In the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War, which should remain for ever a warning for the world, in the very city of Warsaw there has been raised the voice of the people of good will and the prayer of those who believe in God that he protect humanity from similar trials, that he preserve human consciences from insane and inhuman decisions. How can we fail to see also in this the hand of Divine Providence?

For this reason, in the Letter to the Polish Episcopate for the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War, I wrote: «It could be said that Europe, contrary to appearances, is not yet completely healed of the wounds inflicted throughout the course of the Second World War.

For this to happen, tremendous effort and resolute determination are needed both in the East and in the West. A genuine solidarity is needed» (n. 6).

5. In conclusion, I would like once again to express the hope that the decisions and the solemn acts which sanction them respond both to the millennial rights and traditions of Poland and to the present aspirations of the whole Polish society; that, in accordance with what the Secretary of the Polish Episcopate declared, they have an influence on the realization of civic rights in our country and open horizons to the activity of the Church for the good of society, and that by favouring the growth of the prestige of the Polish State on the international level they may become an important element of the moral order in the society of nations (17 July 1989). In this context I may be permitted to repeat once more the words of my predecessor, Paul VI, who greatly loved the Polish nation. He said that « a rich and happy Poland... is in the interests of peace and of good collaboration among the European nations» (1 December 1977).

Finally, the President of the Polish Council of Ministers has said: «We wish to live with dignity in a sovereign, democratic and legally constituted country which all can consider their own, independently of the various world conceptions, ideas and political orientations. We wish to live in a country that has a healthy economy, where it is worth the effort to work and to save and where the satisfying of the basic material needs does not involve anguish and humiliation. We would like a Poland open to Europe and to the world. A Poland which without inferiority complexes, could make its contribution to the production of material as well as of cultural goods» (12 September 1989). He then continued in the same vein, speaking of the necessity of the great national reconciliation.

The Church has always been of service in the implementation of such a programme in our country. I pray the Lord that this programme may unite around it everything that is good in our country, that it activate and inspire new initiatives, that Poland, faithful to God and to herself, may not disappoint.

And my wish to you, Mr. Ambassador, is that, in accordance with the noble words you have spoken on your own behalf and in the name of the supreme authorities of the Polish State, you may be the spokesman in Rome of the true interests of the country and of the nation.

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