



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO POLAND (MAY 31-JUNE 10, 1997)
VISIT TO THE TOMB OF BLESSED JOHN OF DUKLA

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Dukla
9 June 1997

1. *"O sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!" (Ps 96:1).*

Dear brothers and sisters, how my heart rejoices, because today my pilgrim journey includes a stop in the town where Blessed John of Dukla was born. My thoughts go back to the day many years ago when I visited the shrine of Dukla, in particular the chapel of Blessed John "in the wilderness", as people used to say. Today I come once more to your town, which with all its history "sings to the Lord a song of glory and praise" for the gift of this devoted religious man, whose canonization will take place tomorrow at Krosno.

I cordially greet the Bernardine Fathers, faithful guardians of this place. You are the ones who take care of the relics of your wonderful confrere John. I cordially greet also the priests who work in this town, first of all the Dean, and also the municipal authorities and all the residents of Dukla and the surrounding areas. Today in a sense is your feast day, which God in his goodness has prepared for you. I greet also those who have come from far away, from various parts of the country, to take part in this common meeting of ours.

2. How near to us Blessed John seems in the church where his remains are preserved! I wanted so much to come here, to hear in the silence of the monastery the voice of his heart and with you to enter more deeply into the mystery of his life and holiness. And it was a life offered completely

to God. It began in the nearby hermitage. It was precisely there, in silence and in spiritual struggles, that "God seized him", so that from that moment on they remained together to the end. Among these mountains he learnt ardent prayer and how to live the mysteries of God. Slowly his faith grew even stronger and his love became ever more alive, later to bear salvific fruits no longer in solitude, in the hermitage, but within the walls of the Conventual Franciscan monastery, and then with the Bernardine Fathers, where he spent the last part of his life.

Blessed John earned fame as a wise preacher and zealous confessor. There crowded round him people hungry for sound doctrine of God, to hear his preaching or, at the confessional grill, to seek comfort and counsel. He became famous as a guide of souls and prudent adviser of many. The written accounts say that despite old age and his loss of sight he continued to work, and asked to have his sermons read for him, so as to be able to go on. He would grope his way to the confessional so as to be able to convert people and lead them to God.

3. The holiness of Blessed John sprang from his deep faith. His entire life and his apostolic zeal, his love of prayer and of the Church, all this was founded on faith. It was his source of strength, thanks to which he was able to refuse everything that was material and temporal in order to devote himself to what was of God and the spirit.

I wish to express warm thanks to the Archbishop of Przemyśl for having invited me to Dukla and for his efforts to bring this meeting about. I thank the priests and the men and women Religious present in this border diocese, who, following in the footsteps of Blessed John, lead the People of God along the paths of faith. May God reward your efforts and hard work. My thanks also go to the sick and suffering who carry the cross of old age and loneliness, in the nearby area of Korczyn and in other places of mankind's Calvary. I also address the youth: do not be afraid of adversity, do not be discouraged by it, but be filled with trust in the powerful help of the devout John; with courage and enthusiasm carry the light of the Gospel. Have the courage to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We also pray here, in this place, to obtain many vocations to the priesthood and religious life and for new apostolic vocations among the laity.

4. Brothers and Sisters, visit this place often! It is the great treasure of this land, because here the Spirit of God speaks to people's hearts through the mediation of your fellow holy countryman. He says that personal, family and social life must be built on faith in Jesus Christ. For faith gives meaning to all our efforts. It helps to discover the true good, gives a correct ordering of values, and permeates the whole of life. With what great precision all this is expressed in the Letter of the Apostle Saint John: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 4:5).

In conclusion, receive my blessing, through which I wish to embrace all of you present here, and also your families and dear ones. I bless this town and all its residents.

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