



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE PAUL VI TO THE SLOVAK PILGRIMS

Saturday, 14 September 1963

Beloved Sons and Daughters!

We are particularly happy to welcome the Slovak Pilgrimage, led to Us by Our beloved Brother, Andrew Gregory Grutka, Bishop of Gary in the United States of America, and composed, principally, of members of the «Slovak Catholic Federation of America», who have been joined by groups of Slovaks from Austria, Belgium, France and Italy, accompanied by their priests.

Beloved children, your visit is pleasing to Us for many reasons: first of all, because of your numbers and the variety of countries from which you have travelled, but bound, nevertheless, by a unity of common fatherland of origin and of the Catholic Faith. Your presence here brings to Our mind a people most dear. We are aware of their loyalty to Our religion and of the richness of their spiritual, moral and cultural traditions, as well as of their problems. You recall to Our attention a good people, hardworking, pious - for whom We nourish great esteem and affection, and for whom We ask the Lord's protection and comfort.

In the second place, the motive for your trip to Rome touches Our heart: after a three-year spiritual preparation, you wish to conclude the celebration of the eleventh centenary of the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the land of your origin. What a wise proposal to enrich your thought with a remembrance of such an important historical fact!

Above all, it is a characteristic of Catholic education to draw from history not only cultural material and reminders of past events, but also a living tradition, a spiritual coefficient of moral formation, a constant direction for a direct and coherent progress in the march of time, a guarantee of stability and endurance, which gives to a people its dignity, its right to life, its duty to act in harmony with other peoples. One of the defects of modern sociology, most frequent and most serious, is to

underestimate tradition, that is, to presume that a firm and coherent society can be established without taking into account the historical foundation on which it naturally rests, and that the breaking away from the culture inherited from preceding generations can be more beneficial to the life of a people than the progressive development, faithful and wise, of its patrimony of thought and habits. And furthermore, if this patrimony is rich with those universal and immortal values which the Catholic faith instills in the conscience of a people, then to respect tradition means to guarantee the moral life of that people; it means to give them a consciousness of their existence, and to merit for them those divine helps which confer on the city of this world something of the splendor and perpetuity of the heavenly city.

And this seems to Us all the more true and all the more beautiful in your case, dear Slovak children, because your centuries-old traditions, worthily recalled and celebrated by you, are really religious traditions, Catholic traditions, and what is more, and this is marvelous and moving, they are bound to Rome, to this Catholic, eternal and universal Rome, center of unity and «common fatherland» of peoples, who draw from it and share with it the civilization of the faith and charity of Christ.

That your footsteps led you here, where your holy protectors (We can call them, in a certain sense, your holy Founders) came after evangelizing the land, which you justly call the land of your origin, is magnificent; it is a fact with historic and symbolic significance.

Here Cyril and Methodius, having left Constantinople four years before to evangelize Moravia, returned to give an account of their work, to defend it and to receive approbation of it. Here Pope Adrian II received them solemnly; here, he recognized the merits of the two brothers, inventors of the script which today we call Cyrillic after one of them; here, he approved as legitimate and prudent the use of the ancient Slavic language in the liturgy and in the first translation of the Sacred Books in the idiom of that day; here, the two missionaries were elevated to the Episcopate; here, they deposited, where they are still honored, the relics of St. Clement, alongside of which later the body of Cyril, who here completed his earthly life, was placed; and from here, Methodius left again for the land of the Slavs to undertake a new missionary journey, entailing new trials and new happy successes.

By coming to Rome as pilgrims to venerate their memory and their relics, you therefore unite history with the present life of your people; you recognize its authentic spirit, you reconfirm its continuity, and you prepare its future.

One fact shows that these are your sentiments and your purposes, and this increases in Us gratitude and joy for your visit. We in fact know that one particular ceremony will make your Roman pilgrimage memorable; We refer to the inauguration of the Institute dedicated to Saints Cyril and Methodius, an Institute which will house and educate the Slovak youth, who intend to consecrate their lives to the religious and moral service of their fellow Slovaks, and to test and

strengthen their priestly vocations to that end.

We cannot but be happy about such a development. We know that this Institute, destined to become the hearth of the religious life of Slovaks in Rome, had already been canonically erected in the Diocese of Porto and Santa Rufina on January 8, 1961, of which Our beloved Predecessor of happy memory, Pope John XXIII, blessed the first stone on May 13, 1963. It is a worthy work and a grand one, for which We should be grateful to so many Slovak benefactors scattered throughout the world, among whom are numbered also those of modest means - all with generosity and sacrifice meriting Our praise and a divine reward. We want to be mindful specially of the Slovak people resident in the United States of America, who, under the auspices of the «Slovak Catholic Federation of America», have responded generously to the untiring efforts of the above-mentioned Bishop Grutka in order that this work could achieve its goal.

The official and effective support which Their Eminences, Cardinal Tisserant, Bishop of Porto and Santa Rufina, Cardinal Pizzardo, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of "Seminaries, Cardinal Confalonieri, Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, gave to the foundation of this Institute is well known to Us. To them goes the expression of Our heartfelt gratitude.

Dear Sons of the Slovak nation, to Our satisfaction and to Our praise, for reasons already explained, allow Us to add a word of paternal recommendation - perseverance. Continue to cultivate the memory, the cult, the imitation of your Saints, who from the distant Middle Ages even now light the paths along which the spirit of the Slovak people must pass in our time and in the future; solemnly confirm your Catholic faith on the Roman remains of their mission; in the Institute, which you have founded at the gates of Rome, concentrate your good ideals and your hopes; make it the contact point for your groups scattered through the world; send to it your sons whom the Lord might call to His service in the priestly ministry; and continue to maintain it with your offerings and your confidence.

From Our part, We will pray that your Saints Cyril and Methodius, who strengthen and sustain your loyalty, may hold your hearts united in fraternal spiritual bonds and that they may continue to protect your fatherland; and aided by their intercession, We will invoke the Sorrowful Mother whom the Slovaks lovingly consider their heavenly Patroness.

And, sure of your constant fealty to the Catholic Church and to the See of St. Peter, We will continue to have paternal concern for you and to comfort you with Our Apostolic Benediction, as We do now from Our heart.
