



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MÜNCHEN, ALTÖTTING AND REGENSBURG
(SEPTEMBER 9-14, 2006)

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

*International Airport Franz Joseph Strauss, Munich
Saturday, 9 September 2006*

*Mr President,
Madam Chancellor and Mr Prime Minister,
My Brother Cardinals and Bishops,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear fellow countrymen!*

Today with great emotion I set foot, for the first time since my elevation to the Chair of Peter, on German and Bavarian soil. I return to my homeland and among my own people, in order to visit certain places of fundamental importance in my life. I thank you, Mr President of the Republic, for your cordial words of welcome. In these words I sense a faithful echo of the sentiments of all our people. I thank the Chancellor, Dr Angela Merkel, and the Prime Minister, Dr Edmund Stoiber, for the kindness with which they have honoured my arrival on German and Bavarian soil. I also offer greetings and the expression of my gratitude to the members of Government, the ecclesiastical, civil and military authorities, and all those who are here to welcome me on this visit, which is so meaningful for me.

At this moment, many memories of the years I passed in Munich and Regensburg come back to mind: memories of people and events which have deeply marked my life. Conscious of how much I have received, I have come here above all to express my deep gratitude towards all those who

helped shape me as a person over decades of my life. But I also come here as the Successor of the Apostle Peter, to reaffirm and strengthen the deep bonds linking the See of Rome and the Church in our native land.

These bonds have a history going back centuries and constantly nourished by firm adherence to the values of the Christian faith, an adherence in which the region of Bavaria can take particular pride. It is witnessed to by famous monuments, majestic cathedrals, statues and paintings of great artistic value, literary works, cultural initiatives and above all, the many individual and community events which reflect the Christian beliefs of successive generations in this Land which is so dear to me. The relations between Bavaria and the Holy See, notwithstanding some moments of tension, have always been marked by cordial respect. At decisive moments in their history, the Bavarian people have always confirmed their sincere devotion to the See of Peter and their firm attachment to the Catholic faith. The *Mariensäule*, which stands in the central square of our capital Munich, is an eloquent testimony to that faith.

Today's social context is in many ways different from that of the past. Still, I think we are all united in the hope that new generations will remain faithful to the spiritual patrimony which has withstood all the crises of history. My visit to the land of my birth is meant to be an encouragement in this regard: Bavaria is a part of Germany; sharing in the ups and downs of Germany's history, and has good reason to be proud of the traditions inherited from the past. My hope is that all my compatriots in Bavaria and throughout Germany will play an active part in transmitting to tomorrow's citizens the fundamental values of the Christian faith, which sustains all and is not a source of division, but rather opens up and brings closer together persons of different peoples, cultures and religions. I would gladly have visited other parts of Germany too, including all the various local Churches, especially those linked to personal memories. I have received many signs of affection from everywhere, and especially from the Dioceses of Bavaria, during this early stage of my Pontificate and over all these years. This is a source of strength to me every day. So I want to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude. I have also been able to read about and to follow what has been done in these weeks and months, and how many people have helped in every way possible to make this a wonderful visit. And now let us thank the Lord who gives us also the Bavarian sky, since this was not something we could have ordered. Thank you! May God repay you for all that has been done by all sorts of people – I will come back to this on other occasions – in order to guarantee the smooth running of this visit and these days.

In addition to this greeting to you, my dear compatriots – I see before me the stages of my visit, from Marktl and Tittmoning to Aschau, Traunstein, Regensburg and Munich – in addition to you I wish naturally to greet with affection all the people of Bavaria and the whole of Germany. I am thinking here not only of the Catholic faithful, to whom my visit is principally directed, but also of the members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, particularly Evangelical and Orthodox Christians. With your words, Mr President of the Republic, you have interpreted the sentiments of my own heart: even if five hundred years cannot simply be eliminated by a bureaucratic move or

through intelligent speeches, we will be committed with heart and reason to draw closer one to another. Finally I greet the followers of other religions and all people of good will who have at heart the peace and freedom of this country and our world. May the Lord bless the efforts of all those concerned to build a future of true well-being, based on that justice which creates peace. I entrust these prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary, venerated in this land as the *Patrona Bavariae*. I do so in the classic prayer of Jakob Balde, written here on the base of the Mariensäule: *Rem regem regimen regionem religionem conserva Bavaris, Virgo Patrona, tuis!* – Preserve, O Virgin and Patroness, for your Bavarian people, their goods (as they say in dialect, their “stuff”), their government, their land and their religion!

To all those present I offer a heartfelt “Grüß Gott!”

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