APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND

WELCOMING CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Krakow

Wednesday, 6 June 1979 *Beloved Brothers and Sisters!*By the inscrutable design of Providence I had to leave the episcopal see of Saint Stanislaus at Krakow, and from 16 October 1978 to occupy that of Saint Peter in Rome. The choice of the Sacred College was for me an expression of the will of Christ himself. To this will I desire to remain always submissive and faithful. I desire furthermore to serve, with all my strength, the great cause to which I was called, that is, the proclaiming of the Gospel and the work of salvation. I thank you because you have helped me spiritually, above all with your prayers.If I say this with the first words with which I greet you, it is because Christ writes his calls in the living heart of man. And my heart was and has not ceased to be united with you, with this city, with this patrimony, with this *"Polish Rome"*.Here, in this land, I was born.Here, in Krakow, I spent the greater part of my life, beginning with my enrolment in the Jagellonian University in 1938.Here, I received the grace of my priestly vocation.I was consecrated Bishop in the Cathedral of Wawel, and in January 1964 I inherited the great patrimony of the Bishops of Krakow.Krakow, from the tenderest years of my life, has been for me a particular synthesis of all that it means to be Polish and Christian. She has always spoken of the great historic past of my Motherland. She always represented for me in a sublime way the spirit of my country.I remember the old Krakow of the university years of my youth—and the new Krakow which, with the construction of Nowa Huta, has almost tripled in size. This Krakow, in whose problems I participated as pastor, as Bishop, as Cardinal.Today, I greet my beloved Krakow as a pilgrim.I greet all that which constitutes it: the witness of history, the tradition of the kings, the cultural and scientific patrimony and, at the same time, the modern metropolis.I especially greet you, the residents of Krakow, all of you and each one of you. I come back to you for the few days of the jubilee of Saint Stanislaus, as to a great family.You are so close to me. Because of the separation to which the Lord has called me, I feel even closer to you. I wish to express my sentiments and good wishes with the words of Saint Ignatius of Antioch. "May the grace of the Lord now give you everything in abundance... Just as you have comforted me in every way, so may the Lord Jesus, give you consolation. You have shown me your love both when I was present and when I was absent; may the Lord reward you for this." (Letter to the faithful of Smyrna, IX, 2: *Sources Chrétiennes* X, 164.)During these few days that I will be spending with you I wish to do the same things that I have always done: proclaim "the great works of God" (Acts 2:11), give witness to the Gospel and serve the dignity of man. As Saint Stanislaus did so many centuries ago.

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