



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO POLISH PILGRIMS ON THE OCCASION OF
THE NINTH CENTENARY OF**

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST STANISLAUS *Wednesday, 16 May 1979 Beloved Fellow-countrymen!* On the occasion of this exceptional meeting I would like to greet you with the words of the Christian greeting: *Praised be Jesus Christ.* Together with you I would like to greet Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, present here. Protector of the pastoral care of Poles in emigration, he is for us all the exceptional, living symbol of the unity of the Poles in their homeland and all over the world. Together with the Cardinal Primate I greet the Pastors of the Church in Poland present at this audience: Henryk Gulbonowicz, Archbishop of Wrocław, Kazimierz Majdąński, Bishop of Szczecin-Kamień, Józef Glemp, Bishop of Warmia, Bronisław Dąbrowski, Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Poland, Jan Wosiński, Auxiliary Bishop of Płock. In particular I cordially greet Bishop Władysław Rubin, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, Delegate of the Cardinal Primate for the pastoral care of emigrant Poles, and Bishop Szczepan Wesoły, Bishop Rubin's collaborator in the same work. I greet all those in charge of pastoral care for Poles all over the world. I greet also the *Sisters* present here with all the representatives of Poland from the five continents and twenty countries all over the world. It has been possible to arrange this exceptional meeting on the occasion of the great jubilee of St Stanislaus. The anniversary of his death, which took place in 1079 at the hands of King Boleslaus Smiały, has always been celebrated every hundred years. The last time it was celebrated was in 1889 at Krakow in Poland and all over the world. Divine Providence has brought about such marvellous events that this jubilee is celebrated by Poland and by emigrant Poles *together with the Pope*, a Pope who until a short time ago was successor of St Stanislaus in the episcopal See of Krakow. The same who, together with the Cardinal Primate, the Bishops of Poland, and particularly with the Bishops who are in Rome, was preparing the programme of this jubilee both in Krakow and in the Eternal City.² Various circumstances show that the nine-hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Bishop of Krakow must be of particular importance also in Rome. Among these circumstances, the following is important: that St Stanislaus, as the Patron Saint of Poland, is a particular *witness to the millennium of our Baptism*; this millennium has been lived in uninterrupted communion with Peter's See in Rome. The canonization of St Stanislaus took place in Assisi in 1253, and for this reason, too, our thoughts must go to the "Italian land", which, as a result of cultural and historical bonds, has been close to Poland so many times in the course of the centuries. Another particular circumstance is the anniversary of the institution which has borne the name of St Stanislaus right from its origin. I am referring to the Polish Hospice in Rome, joined to the church of St Stanislaus, the origin of which four hundred years ago we owe to the Servant of God Cardinal Stanislaus Hozjusz, Bishop of Warmia and one of the pontifical legates at the Council of Trent. This church, with the Hospice of St Stanislaus, is a particular *sign of Poland's historical presence in Rome*³. It is a very important sign in our times. After the second World War, the Centre for pastoral care of *Poles abroad* was set up

beside the church of St Stanislaus. Here, next to this church, is the principal centre of which Archbishop Jozef Gawlina was in charge until 1964, followed by Bishop Wladislaw Rubin. Cardinal Hozjusz founded this Hospice in Rome for pilgrims arriving there. It was the time of the First Polish Republic, the last period of the golden age of Polish history. It can be thought that not only pilgrims coming from Poland had their hospice here, but Poland itself: this nation, united with the Catholic Church for so many centuries, had in Rome a house that bore witness to its presence among the other Catholic nations of Europe. From the last years of the nineteenth century and then through the twentieth century, painful changes took place in our nation and our State, forcing so many children of our country to emigrate. It was at first a political, ideological and cultural *emigration*. Subsequently it was to find work, and so, many millions of poor Poles, particularly from the country, emigrated mainly across the Ocean. The outbreak of the *last war* coincided with this wave of migrants. The war surprised very many sons and daughters of our country outside its frontiers, and they offered their lives for their homeland and for its independence on all the world fronts—and after the war they were not able to return to Poland for which they had fought. So in our age, too, a new part of the books on Polish pilgrimages is being written, as was done by Mickiewicz. This meeting of ours today must be included in this part. Let us leave it to Divine Providence to give an important significance to this meeting of fellow-countrymen from all over the world with the Polish Pope, because none of us can do it. To give it its full significance, it would be necessary to have knowledge of the past and of the future. Knowledge of the *future* depends entirely on the *Wisdom and Power of God*.⁴ Let us now stop at this point, which enables us to go back over our history and also to know the present: we must draw from our meeting fundamental motives, which take us directly to the great anniversary of St Stanislaus. Medieval tradition confirms that he is the exceptional *Patron Saint of the Poles*. This Poland of the Piasti which was broken up had to have this Patron Saint of the unity of the country, not only to remain united but, above all, to set out along the way to progress. We know that this development started from the end of the fourteenth century when unity tested first on the crown of Wladyslaw Lokietek and then on that of Kazimierz Wielki. The *period of Polish universalism* begins at this time, with the first rise to importance of Krakow University. Other important events followed: the beginning of the Jagiello dynasty, the beneficial work of blessed Queen Jadwiga, the Polish-Lithuanian union, the great development of Christian humanistic culture, These were the fruits of the Baptism of Poland as they were revealed at that precise historical moment. Universalism means *belonging to the human community*, which is wider than one's own nation. It also signifies the maturity of this nation, which gives it almost full rights among all the nations of the world. Universalism has a deeply humanistic character, and we can also see in it an exceptional Christian influence which wishes to unite men on the basis of full *respect for their dignity*, for their being subjects, for their freedom and their rights. We all have the same Father⁵. At this exceptional meeting today we must hope—with the help of God's Grace and through the intercession of Mary Mother of the Church who is our Lady of Jasna Gora, Queen of Poland, with the intercession of St Stanislaus, St Wojciech [Adalbert] and all Polish Saints and Blesseds up to Blessed Maximilian Kolbe and Blessed Mary Teresa Ledochowska—that all of us, wherever we may be, may succeed in bearing witness to the maturity of Poland, in strengthening our right of citizenship among all the nations of Europe and of

the world, and in serving this noble purpose: to bear witness to Christian universalism. In the past I several times had the fortune to visit the great centres of Polish emigration. Today I ask you, dear fellow-countrymen, to accept the Blessing from the hand of the Pope, from the Primate of Poland, and from the Bishops here present who represent the Polish Episcopate—take it to your families, to your communities, to your parishes, to your places of work—as a sign of this meeting which will always remain in my heart © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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