



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO IRELAND

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC*

Dublin

Saturday, 29 September 1979

Mr President,

I wish to express my gratitude for the warm welcome that I have received on my arrival in Ireland from the people of Ireland, as well as from their distinguished Representatives. I express my sincere thanks to you, Mr President, for the kind words that you addressed to me, with which you have wished to honour not only my person but the Head of the Roman Catholic Church.

It was fitting, after my visit to Latin America and to my beloved homeland, that I should accept the invitation of the Irish Episcopate to come to your Emerald Isle and meet your people. Many are indeed the bonds that unite your country to the See of Peter in Rome. From the earliest beginnings of Christianity in this land, all through the centuries until the present day, never has the love of the Irish for the Vicar of Christ been weakened, but it has flourished as an example for all to witness. In receiving the faith from Saint Patrick, the Irish Catholic people have also accepted that the Church of Christ is built on the Rock that is Peter, and they have established that loving relationship with the Successors of Saint Peter that has always been a guarantee for the preservation of their faith. It gives me pleasure to state here that this unfailing loyalty has been matched only by their profound devotion to our Blessed Lady and by their steadfast fidelity to the duties of religion.

The history of Ireland has certainly not been without its share of suffering and pain. Economic and social conditions have induced many of her sons and daughters in the past to leave home and family and to seek elsewhere the opportunities for life in dignity that were not to be found here.

Their loss for Ireland has been a gain for the countries where they settled. Those who remained have not always enjoyed a progress without setbacks. But through it all, the Irish have displayed an uncommon courage and perseverance inspired by their faith. May I be allowed, Mr President, to quote here from your last Saint Patrick's Day Message, where you credit your Patron Saint for "the moral fibre and spiritual wealth that sustained our nation in times of trial".

My fervent wish for you and your fellow Irish men and women is that those same qualities—heritage of a living faith preserved and deepened through the centuries—may enable this country to move towards the Third Millennium and to achieve a well-being that constitutes a true human advancement for all your people, a well-being that brings honour to the name and the history of Ireland. The vitality that draws its strength from over fifteen centuries of uninterrupted Christian tradition will enable you to tackle the many problems of a modern and still young Republic.

The elimination of poverty, the uplifting of the deprived, the finding of full employment for all and especially for the very large number of splendid young people with whom God has blessed your country at this time, the creation of social and economic well-being for all classes of society remain real challenges. Reaching the goals of justice in the economic and social fields will require that religious convictions and fervour be not separated from a moral and social conscience, especially for those who plan and control the economic process, be they legislators, government officials, industrialists, trade unionists, office workers or manual workers.

The part that your nation has played with prominence and distinction in the history of Europe, on the spiritual and cultural level, will inspire you also in the future, to make your own distinctive contribution to the growing unity of the European continent, preserving at the same time the values that characterize your community, and witnessing for them in the midst of the political, economic, social and cultural currents that flow through Europe in these days.

It is my fervent wish that this same Ireland will also continue, as it has in the past, to be a force for understanding, brotherhood and collaboration among all the nations of the world. Many of your fellow men and women are working already in every part of the world—and I mention here with special gratitude your many missionaries—bringing through their labours and their zeal, through their unpretentious and unselfish dedication, the assistance that so many of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world need to advance in their own development and to be able to satisfy their basic needs.

Irish exiles and Irish missionaries have gone all over the world, and wherever they have gone they have made the name of Ireland loved and honoured. The history of Ireland has been and is a source of human and spiritual inspiration to people everywhere. Ireland has inherited a noble Christian and human mission and her contribution to the well-being of the world and to the shaping of a new Europe can be as great today as it was in the greatest days of Ireland's history. That is

the mission, that is the challenge facing Ireland in this generation.

Finally, Mr President, I want to make a plea for peace and harmony for all the people of this Island. Your sadness for the continued unrest, injustice, and violence in Northern Ireland is also my personal sadness and sorrow. On the occasion of the Feast of Saint Patrick in 1972, my beloved and revered Predecessor, Pope Paul VI, whose love for Ireland will always be remembered with gratitude, wrote to the late Cardinal William Conway : "The Christian faith must convince all concerned that violence is not an acceptable solution to the problems of Ireland. But at the same time, the Christian sense of values convinces man that lasting peace can be built only on the firm foundation of justice". Those words retain their full meaning today.

I thank you once again for your courteous and warm reception. I lovingly bless you, your land and your people.

Dia agus Muire libh

Beannacht Dé is Muire libh.

May God and Mary be with you.

May the blessing of God and the blessing of Mary be with you and with the people of Ireland always.

*AAS 71 (1979) p. 1085-1087.

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