



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
TO NORWAY, ICELAND, FINLAND,
DENMARK AND SWEDEN

WELCOME CEREMONY IN NORWAY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Fornebu International Airport, Oslo
Thursday, 1st June 1989

Madam Prime Minister,
Members of the Government,
My brother Bishops,
Your Excellencies,
Dear People of Norway,

1. Standing here on Norwegian soil, I am fully conscious of the special significance of this occasion. For the first time ever, a Bishop of Rome, a Successor of the Apostle Peter, has come to Norway and to the Nordic countries. I come, not as the representative of a political or national interest, but as a witness to the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as a brother deeply concerned with the well-being of his brothers and sisters in every part of the world. *I come to Norway as a friend*, full of esteem and love for its noble people and its millenary Christian heritage.

2. My words of greeting are directed in the first place to *His Majesty King Olav V* and to the members of the Royal Family, whom I look forward to meeting shortly.

To you, Madam Prime Minister and Members of the Government, I express my appreciation and gratitude for all you have done to make this visit possible, and for the warm welcome you have given me.

3. I assure the bishops and members of the *Catholic community* that it is with intense joy I am making this pastoral visit. I am immensely grateful to God whose loving Providence enables me to carry out the Petrine ministry also by way of personal contact with the particular Churches in many parts of the world. Through the Eucharist and through prayer our union in faith and love will grow; together we shall proclaim our allegiance to Christ and receive strength from him for ever greater Christian service.

4. My pilgrimage to Norway is also in response to the gracious invitation of the *Lutheran Church* to participate in a service of prayer for Christian unity at Nidaros Cathedral, the hallowed national shrine where Saint Olav, King and Martyr, is buried. I thank you, dear Lutheran brothers and sisters, for that kindness and for the climate of friendship and ecumenical understanding it displays.

My visit to the Nordic countries is *a confirmation of the Catholic Church's commitment to the ecumenical task* of fostering unity among all Christians. Twenty-five years ago the Second Vatican Council clearly impressed the urgency of this challenge on the Church. My predecessors have pursued this goal with persevering attention to the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is the divine source and guarantor of the ecumenical movement. From the beginning of my Pontificate I have made ecumenism a priority of my pastoral concern and action. God grant that my visit will bring us ever closer to that full fellowship in faith and love which Christ himself wished for his followers (Cfr. *Io. 17, 21*).

5. I have come to the Nordic countries as *a spiritual pilgrim to honour the memory of the Saints* who called your ancestors to the faith, led them to Baptism and bore valiant witness to Christ, even at times to the shedding of their blood for his sake. The great Saints of the North were men and women rooted in their own historical context, individuals who knew how to apply the message of God's eternal love – revealed in Jesus Christ – to the important questions affecting their peoples and the world around them. Their example still speaks to us today about the profound truths and values on which the whole of European civilization was built and in which your own Norwegian culture developed – truths and values which have lost nothing of their relevance for contemporary society, since they reveal “man's deepest sphere” and give back “meaning to his life in the world” (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Redemptoris Hominis*, 10). To remember the events and influences which have shaped a nation is to understand better the sources of its present historical direction.

6. Here in Oslo, I wish to pay tribute to the special attention which *present-day Norway* gives to fostering and defending freedom and human rights. In the international forum you have taken a keen interest in the welfare of other peoples and you strive to raise your voice whenever human dignity and fundamental rights are threatened or violated. Norway is generous in giving aid to developing countries. Your soldiers – at no little sacrifice – play an important part in the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces. All of these forms of *solidarity* manifest the maturity of your national life and your awareness of the interdependence of peoples in achieving higher standards

of development and a greater sharing in social and political life. Peace is solidly served when the deeper aspirations of peoples to justice, freedom and dignity are upheld.

7. Norway, and indeed all of Scandinavia, has opened its doors to *many refugees* forced to flee their homelands in search of safety and freedom. They have lost so much that is dear to them, and you have given them new hope. From you they have received genuine compassion and humanitarian care. In coming here they have had to adapt to much that was strange to them, but, in turn, you have received from them the treasures of their cultural and spiritual background. You love and serve them best by enabling them to preserve and develop their own unique qualities. I am aware that many of your new immigrants are Catholics, and I look forward to meeting them during this visit.

8. Madam Prime Minister, dear Norwegian friends: again I express my gratitude for the welcome you have given me. My stay among you will be short but intense. May it serve to strengthen the friendship between us, a friendship confirmed by the establishment in 1982 of full diplomatic relations between Norway and the Holy See.

Ja, Vi Elsker Dette Landet. (Yes, we love this country) (Excerptus "Inno Nazionale").

Gud velsigne Norge! (God bless Norway).

Gud velsigne hele det norske folk! (God bless the Norwegian people).

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