



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO POLAND (MAY 31-JUNE 10, 1997)
**MASS FOR THE CANONIZATION
OF BLESSED JOHN OF DUKLA**

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Krosno - 10 June 1997

1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me" (Is 61:1).*

These words of the Prophet Isaiah, which we heard in the first reading, were read by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Is 61:1-2). That day, in the synagogue, Jesus proclaimed the fulfilment of those words: the Holy Spirit had anointed Jesus himself, with a view to his messianic mission. But those words have a meaning which extends to all those called and sent by God in order to continue Christ's mission. Therefore they can certainly be applied to John of Dukla, whom I have today been enabled to number among the Church's saints.

I thank God that the canonization of Blessed John of Dukla can take place where he was born. Both his name and the glory of his holiness are linked for ever to Dukla, the small yet ancient town situated at the foot of Mount Cergowa and the Central Beskid chain. These mountains and this city have been familiar to me for years. Many times I would come here or I would go towards Bieszczady, or else in the opposite direction, from Bieszczady by way of the Lower Beskid, up to Krynica. I came to know the people of the area, kind and hospitable, although sometimes amazed at the sight of a group of young people wandering about their mountains with heavy knapsacks. I

am glad to have been able to come back here and, amid these beautiful mountains and at the foot of Mount Cergowa, to proclaim your countryman and fellow townsman a saint of the Catholic Church.

John of Dukla is one of the many saints and beati who grew up Poland during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. All were linked to the royal city of Krakow. They were drawn by the Faculty of Theology in Krakow, founded through the efforts of Queen Hedwig towards the end of the fourteenth century. They enlivened the university city with the freshness of their youth and their holiness, and from there they went eastwards. Their roads led mainly to Lviv, as in the case of John of Dukla, who spent most of his life in that great city, a centre closely linked to Poland, especially since the times of Casimir the Great. Saint John of Dukla is the patron of the city of Lviv and of the whole surrounding area.

Now his name will be for ever linked not only to the city where his canonization is taking place, Krosno on the Wislok, but also to Przemysl and the Archdiocese of Przemysl, whose Pastor, Archbishop Józef Michalik, I greet cordially. Together with him I greet his predecessor, Archbishop Ignacy Tokarczuk, whose name is inscribed in a particular way in the history of the present-day Church in Poland. The Church cannot forget his great courage at the time of the Communist governments, and above all the determination which he showed in the struggle to build places of worship needed by the Church in Poland. I rejoice that on this occasion I am able once more to meet the dear Archbishop to whom I was so close during the time when I was the Metropolitan of Krakow. I cordially greet Bishop Boleslaw, for many years the Auxiliary Bishop, now emeritus, and the present Auxiliary of Przemysl, Bishop Stefan.

I rejoice at the presence here among us of Archbishop Marian Jaworski of Lviv, the city in which he was born and grew up, and to which he has returned as Pastor of the Church which is now experiencing rebirth: Lviv, the city rightly called *semper fidelis*! I greet all the Bishops of the Metropolitan Sees of Przemysl and Lviv and also the many priests present, diocesan and religious, the women religious and you, dear brothers and sisters who live in this land where I was so often a guest and which I love with all my heart.

2. *Today, as we celebrate the canonization of John of Dukla, we need to examine in a broader historical context the vocation and mission of this spiritual son of Saint Francis. Four centuries earlier, Poland had accepted Christianity. Almost four hundred years had passed from the days when Saint Adalbert had worked in Poland. The following centuries had been marked by the martyrdom of Saint Stanislaus, by the further progress of evangelization and by the growth of the Church in our land. In great measure this was connected with the activity of the Benedictines. With the thirteenth century the sons of Saint Francis of Assisi arrived in Poland. The Franciscan movement found fertile soil in our lands. It too bore fruit in a host of beati and saints who, following the example of the Poor Man of Assisi, enlivened Polish Christianity with the spirit of poverty and brotherly love. To the tradition of evangelical poverty and simplicity of life they added knowledge*

and wisdom, which in turn had an effect on their pastoral work. It can be said that they had taken seriously the words of the Letter to Timothy which we heard in today's second reading: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tim 4:1-2). This sound doctrine, already indispensable at the time of Paul, was also indispensable in the times when John of Dukla lived and worked. In those days too there were those who did not endure sound doctrine, but accumulated for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, turning away from listening to the truth and wandering into myths (cf. 2 Tim 4:3-4).

The same difficulties are with us today too. So let us accept the words of Paul as if they were spoken once more to us through the life of Saint John of Dukla, spoken again to each and every one of us, and particularly to priests and men and women religious: "As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5).

"You have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt 23:10-12). This was precisely the evangelical programme which Saint John of Dukla carried out in his life. It is a programme centred on Christ. Jesus Christ was his only master. Imitating without reserve the example of his Master and Lord, he desired above all else to serve. In this consists the Gospel of wisdom, love and peace. He gave expression to this Gospel in the whole of his life. And today this evangelical work of John of Dukla has attained the glory of the altars. In his native country he has been proclaimed a saint of the universal Church. His canonization is part of the path by which the Church advances, the path which leads to the goal of the second millennium of Christ's birth. Together with all who guide the Church in Poland during this period, tertio millennio adveniente, together with Saint Adalbert, Saint Stanislaus, Saint Hedwig, Saint John of Dukla is also present. And his canonization is a new treasure of the Church in our native land. Perhaps it is a particular epilogue to the vows which John Casimir once made before our Lady of Graces in the Cathedral of Lviv.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, from this place where we can see fields green with wheat, fields which will shortly grow golden and begin inviting the farmer to labour "for his bread" - in this place I wish to recall the words spoken by King John Casimir on that historic day before the throne of Our Lady of Graces in the Cathedral of Lviv. Those words expressed a great concern for the whole nation, the desire for justice and the commitment to lift the burdens weighing down upon his subjects, especially those who worked the land.

Today, during the canonization of John of Dukla, a son of this region, I wish to pay homage to the work of farmers. I pay my respects to this land of Bieszczady, which in its history has experienced much suffering among wars and conflicts, and today is being tested by new difficulties, especially unemployment. *I wish to pay homage to the farmers' love of the land, that has always been the*

strong support on which the identity of the nation depended. At moments of great danger, at the most dramatic moments in the nation's history, this love and this attachment to the land proved extremely important in the struggle for survival. Today, at a time of great changes, it is not right to forget this. *I pay homage to the hands of the Polish people who till the soil*, to these hands which from the unyielding, harsh soil produce bread for the country, and which in times of danger are prepared to guard and defend it.

Remain faithful to the traditions of your ancestors! As they raised their eyes from the ground, their gaze embraced the horizon, where the sky meets the earth, and they raised to heaven their prayers for a good harvest, for seed, for the sower and for grain, for bread. In the Name of God they began each day and all their labours, and with God they ended their work of tilling the soil. Remain faithful to this ancient tradition! *It expresses the deepest truth about the meaning and fruitfulness of your work.*

In this way you will be like the sower in the Gospel. *Respect every seed of wheat which hides within itself the wondrous power of life. Respect too the seed of God's word.* May there never disappear from the mouths of Polish farmers the beautiful greetings "Szczesc Boze" ("God bless you") and "Praised be Jesus Christ". Greet one another with these words as a way of offering your best wishes. These words express your Christian dignity. Do not let them be taken away from you - some people are trying to do so! The world is full of dangers. Through the means of communication certain messages are reaching the Polish countryside too. Build a rural culture in which, together with what is new and modern, there will still be room - as in the home of a good master - for the old things, sanctified by tradition, confirmed by the truth of centuries.

With heartfelt love for this land, I wish also to tell you of my appreciation for the sacrifices you have made in order to build places of worship. Often, from your hard work in the fields you have been able to extract that widow's mite which makes it possible for Christ to have a place in this corner of Poland. May God reward you for these beautiful churches, the fruit of the work of your hands and the fruit of your faith. And what deep faith! "I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, for ever" - we said a few minutes ago in the Psalm between the readings (Ps 89:1). You have built these new churches precisely so that you yourselves and generations to come can have a place to sing the glories of the Lord.

We must cling firmly to Christ - the Good Sower - and follow his voice along the paths which he shows us. And these are the paths of many different initiatives, growing more numerous in Poland today. I know that great effort is being put into promoting charitable groups and institutions which bear witness to solidarity towards the needy in this country and beyond its borders. We ourselves experienced such help during the difficult years: now we must be able to reciprocate by keeping others in mind. Today our country needs the Catholic laity, that People of God, which Christ and the Church expect. We need lay people who appreciate the need for constant education in the faith. How timely it is that Catholic Action has been revived in the Church in Poland! In your

Archdiocese, as in other Dioceses, it is becoming, together with other movements and communities of prayer, a school of faith. Go forward with courage on this journey, remembering that the greater your involvement in the new evangelization and in social life, the greater need you will have for authentic spirituality, for that close bond with Christ and the Church which is nourished by prayer and reflection on God's word. Such a union must imbue every movement of the heart with God's grace and lead to sanctity.

4. Dear brothers and sisters! The land where we find ourselves is pervaded and overflowing with the holiness of John of Dukla. This holy Religious not only made this beautiful land of Bieszczady famous, but above all he made it holy. You are the heirs of this holiness. As you walk this land, you follow in his footsteps. Here we all mysteriously sense "the riches of the glory of Jesus Christ in his saints" (cf. Eph 1:18). For this land has given many authentic witnesses of Jesus Christ, people who placed their complete trust in God and devoted their lives to proclaiming the Gospel. Follow in their steps! Fix your gaze on their life! Imitate their works, "that the world may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (cf. Mt 5:16). May the faith sown by Saint John in the hearts of your ancestors become like a flourishing tree of sanctity and "bear much fruit, fruit that abides" (cf. Jn 5:5)!

As you make this journey may you be accompanied by the Mother of Christ, who is venerated in numerous shrines in this land. Shortly I shall crown the images of our Lady of Haczów, of Jasliska and of Wielkie Oczy. May this act be the expression of our veneration for Mary and of our hope that, through her intercession, she will help us to carry out God's will to the end. At the time of the Millennium of Poland's Baptism, we learned to sing: "Mary, Queen of Poland, I am close to you, I remember you, I keep watch" (*Call of Jasna Góra*). We rejoice that all the holy patrons of Poland are keeping watch with us. We rejoice and we pray for the Polish nation and for the Church in our land, *tertio millennio adveniente*.

"For so long, Mary, you have been the Queen of Poland... Take under your protection the whole nation which lives for your glory".

Amen.

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