



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KRAKOW

To the beloved Archdiocese of Krakow, to the whole People of God, to my brothers in the Episcopate, to Priests and to male and female Religious families—to everyone!

I am writing these words to you, beloved Brothers and Sisters, at the exceptional and unexpected moment when—by the will of Our Lord Jesus Christ, expressed by the conclave of Cardinals after the death of Pope John Paul I of unforgettable memory—I leave the Church of Krakow, the episcopal chair of St Stanislaus, to assume St Peter's chair in Rome. In this circumstance I cannot help thinking of you and addressing you, with whom I have been united more closely for twenty years by my episcopal ministry, and before that by pastoral and teaching work, and even before that by the difficult years of the occupation during the war, by the experiences of physical work and finally by my whole life from birth. Believe me, coming to Rome for the conclave, I had no other desire than to come back among you, to my beloved archdiocese and country. But Christ's will was different, therefore I remain and start the new mission he has entrusted to me. Such a high mission, but also such a difficult one, of such responsibility! If we think and reason with our mind, it exceeds human strength. Was not St Peter the first to be afraid of this mission, when he said to Christ: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, o Lord"? (Lk 5:8). And even after the resurrection when, indicating the apostle John, he asked: "Lord, what about this man?" But Christ had confirmed to him: "What is that to you? Follow me." (Jn 21:21-22).

My beloved Brothers and Sisters, allow me to thank you for all the years of my life, years of study, of priesthood, of episcopate. How could I know that all these years would prepare me for the call, made to me by Christ on 16 October in the Sistine chapel? However, in the perspective of this day, I must turn and look at all those who prepared me, without knowing it, for this call. That is, my beloved parents, whose lives ended so long ago; my parish, Wadowice, dedicated to the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the temple; the primary and secondary schools; the Jaghellonic University, the theology faculty; the ecclesiastical seminary. What should I say of my predecessor on the chair of St Stanislaus, Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha, and of the great exile

Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak, of the bishops, of the priests and of so many fervent pastors, profound and excellent teachers, of the exemplary men and women religious; of the many lay people from different walks of life that I have met in my life; of my companions in school, at the university, and in the seminary; of the "Solvay" workers, of the intellectuals, writers, artists, people of different professions; and further, of so many married couples, university students, apostolic groups, of the oases, of so many boys and girls who look for the meaning of life with the Gospel in their hands and who sometimes find the way to priestly or religious vocation?

I bear all this in my heart and in a certain way keep it with me: my whole beloved Church of Krakow, a special part of Christ's Church in Poland and a special part of the history of our native land. Old and new Krakow, the new districts, the new people, the new suburbs, Nowa Huta; concern for the urgency of new churches and new parishes; the new needs for evangelization, catechesis and the apostolate. All this accompanies me on St Peter's Chair. All this constitutes a layer of my soul which I cannot leave. The layer of my experience, of my faith, of my love, which expands and embraces so many places dear to me, so many sanctuaries of Christ and his Mother, such as Mogila, Ludzmiierz, Myslenice, Staniatki or Rychwald, and particularly Kalwaria Zebrzydowka with its paths along which I walked with such pleasure. I keep in my eyes and in my heart the panorama of the land of Krakow, Zywiec, Slask, Podhale, Beskidy and Tatra. I offer to the Lord this beloved land and the whole landscape of Poland, but especially the people.

Once more I thank the Bishops, Julius, John, Stanislaus, Albin, the metropolitan chapter, members of the Curia, the priests' council, the deacons, the parish priests and assistants, for most of you, dear Brothers, received ordination from my episcopal ministry.

Writing these words, I wish to assure you of my faithful memory and constant prayer.

I wish you to accept, as addressed to you, the thoughts which I expressed in the letter to all my fellow-countrymen.

I had to leave Krakow on the eve of preparations for the great jubilee of St Stanislaus. Perhaps God will allow me to take part in it. I hope that the work of seven years in honour of St Stanislaus, that work which we started together in 1972, will ripen and find expression in the decisions of the pastoral Synod, and in everything that aims at the renewal of the Church of Krakow in the spirit of Vatican II.

God bless you all in this work. May he bless the new metropolitan of Krakow, to whom the chair of St Stanislaus will be assigned after me, and the whole People of God of this Church. Once more I entrust you to Christ through the hands and the heart of the Mother of God.

Vatican City, 23 October 1978.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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