



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND

Meeting with Employees of Polish Airline LOT

13 June 1999

Praised be Jesus Christ! With this Christian greeting I wish to welcome all those gathered here. I thank the Cardinal Primate for his presence and for the pastoral care which he gives to the airport situated within the Archdiocese of Warsaw. I greet the Minister of Transport and thank him for his words of welcome. I am glad that during this pilgrimage I have had the opportunity to visit those who work in Polish civil aviation. This meeting of ours is unusual. In fact, I do not often have the chance to meet people representing a professional group. But the seventieth anniversary of the Polish Airline LOT provides the opportunity to make a stop among those who in different ways serve air travellers. In a way, this visit is also prompted by a desire to repay, at least in part, a debt of gratitude to LOT and all the other airlines throughout the world with whom I fly constantly as a pilgrim. I thank you sincerely for this particular help in my service of the Church. I cordially greet the pilots and flight crews. I very much appreciate your professionalism and dedication. Crossing different continents, you bear witness to all that is good about Poland, our culture and our spirituality. I thank you for this and I ask you to continue to care for the good name of Poland in the world. From above, the extraordinary beauty of creation is clearly seen, including the smallness and yet the greatness of man – all of which is a manifestation of the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator. May this daily experience strengthen and renew your faith! May it constantly refresh your confidence in the love of God. I also greet and thank the ground crews. Your work helps people who have to leave the earth, and not just in a physical sense. Often the experience of departure is accompanied by the sense of a loss of security and by an inner disorientation. Therefore, your service of kindness is important: a friendly smile, a kind word, understanding and cordiality. I ask you, perform your service mindful of the words of Christ: *“As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”* (Mt 25:40). Finally, I thank in a special way all those who are engaged in airport maintenance, the technicians and the air traffic controllers. To a large extent you are responsible for the safety of passengers. Yours is a work which goes unnoticed by people. Perhaps this is why it is particularly precious in the eyes of God, who sees the toil of man, even that which is hidden (cf. Mt 6:6). May this awareness sustain you and encourage you to take up your daily tasks with zeal. I am delighted that for some years there have been chapels in four international airports in Poland, where workers and travellers can find moments of silence and prayer. I thank most sincerely all those who have contributed to this. Pastoral care of the world of civil aviation is an expression of the Church’s responsibility and fidelity. “Because no-one can be deprived of the message of salvation, the Church holds out a hand [in this way] to all

those who, because of their circumstances of life, cannot benefit satisfactorily from normal pastoral care or are completely denied it” (cf. Document of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Workers, 1995, Nos. 4-5). For the seventh time, I am the recipient of the kindness of the Polish Airline LOT during this pilgrimage to our homeland. Please accept my heartfelt thanks. At the same time I hope that LOT, Warsaw-Okecie Airport and the other airports of Poland may be constantly developed and modernized, thus becoming a special calling-card of our nation. Engaged as you are in material development, do not forget man. My hope is that you will be able, in a spirit of mutual understanding and generous cooperation, to serve the great work of bringing people closer to one another. To you in your work I impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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