



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR ALEKSANDER KWASNIEWSKI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**

Tuesday, 18 May 2004

Distinguished Mr President,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I offer you a cordial welcome. Our meeting today is taking place in special circumstances. Indeed, it coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino. Every Pole will remember with pride that combat which, thanks to the heroism of the army commanded by General Anders, paved the way for the Allies to achieve the liberation of Italy and the defeat of the Nazi invaders. At the military cemetery in Monte Cassino there are graves marked by Latin and Greek Crosses next to the stones engraved with the Star of David. This is the resting place of the heroes who fell, united by the ideal of fighting for "your freedom and ours" which implies, in addition to patriotic love, concern for the political and spiritual independence of other nations. They all felt it their duty at all costs to oppose the attempt to physically overpower individuals and nations as well as to wipe out their traditions, their cultures and their spiritual identity. I am mentioning this as a reminder that the cultural and spiritual patrimony of Europe was formed and defended down the centuries at the cost of the lives of those who professed Christ as well as of those who referred to Abraham in their religious belief. It seems necessary to remember this in the context of the constitutional foundation of the European Union that has recently admitted Poland. The fact that our fellow countrymen shed their blood at Monte Cassino is a strong argument today in the discussion of what spiritual form to give Europe. Poland cannot forget it nor fail to remind others of it who, in the name of the secular status of democratic societies, seem to have forgotten Christianity's contribution to forging their very identity. I would like to express my appreciation to the President and Authorities of the Republic of Poland for having spared no effort in defending the presence of the Christian values in the European Constitution. I am confident that these initiatives will have a beneficial result. I warmly hope so, for the sake of Poland and for the whole of Europe. I am informed of the current political difficulties in Poland. I hope that they will be quickly overcome. I trust that this will happen in such a way that everyone, and especially the poorest of the poor, large families, the unemployed, the sick and the elderly, may feel safe in our Homeland. It is a challenging task. I therefore hope, Mr President, that you will have the strength and courage, in the contexts of both the Polish State and the European Union, to guide appropriately the efforts of all those who are assuming responsibility for the shape of Europe and the world today. I assure all my compatriots of my remembrance in prayer, and I warmly bless them all. © Copyright

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana