



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MÜNCHEN, ALTÖTTING AND REGENSBURG
(SEPTEMBER 9-14, 2006)

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

*International Airport Franz Joseph Strauss, Munich
Thursday, 14 September 2006*

*Mr Minister President,
Distinguished Government Leaders and Public Authorities,
Dear Cardinals and Brothers in the Episcopate,
Ladies and Gentlemen!*

As I leave Bavaria for Rome, I would like to say to you here present, and through you to all the citizens of my native land, a cordial farewell and to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I was deeply moved by the enthusiasm and fervent devotion of the faithful who gathered devoutly to hear the Word of God and to join in prayer, and who greeted me in the streets and squares. I was able to see how many people in Bavaria still today are endeavouring to journey in communion with their Bishops along the paths of God and to testify to their faith in today's secularized world and to make it present in that world as a shaping force. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the organizers, everything took place in an orderly and peaceful way, in fellowship and joy. And so my first word, in this farewell, must be one of thanks to all who cooperated in achieving these results. I can only say whole-heartedly: "May God reward you!".

Naturally, I turn first to you, Mr Minister President, with gratitude for the kind words which you have rendered a great witness on behalf of our Christian faith as a force for shaping our public life. Heartfelt thanks for this! I thank the other civil and ecclesiastical authorities gathered here,

especially those who contributed to the success of this visit, which enabled me to meet everywhere people from this region who testified to me their joyful affection and to whom my heart remains always bound. These have been busy days, when I was able to re-live in memory many past events which have left a mark on my life. Everywhere I was received with an attention and care, and, I must say more, a welcome marked by the greatest cordiality. This has touched me deeply. I can in some way imagine the challenges, concerns and the work involved in organizing my visit to Bavaria: many people had a part to play, both those from the Church, Regional and State agencies, and the many people who volunteered their time. To all of you I offer a heartfelt "May God reward you!" and the assurance of a special remembrance in my prayers.

I came to Germany, to Bavaria, to bring once more to my fellow-citizens the eternal truths of the Gospel as a truth and power for today, and to confirm believers in their fidelity to Christ, the Son of God, who became man for our salvation. I am convinced, in faith, that in Christ, in his word, we find the way not only to eternal happiness, but also to the building of a humane future even now, on this our land. Impelled by this conviction, the Church, led by the Spirit, has constantly looked to the Word of God so as to be able to respond to new historical challenges. She sought to do so in a special way with regard to the problems arising from the so-called "worker question", beginning particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. I mention this here, because today, 14 September, marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, in which the great Pope John Paul II called work "a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth" (No. 4), and insisted that "the primary basis of the value of work is man himself" (No. 6). Work, he observed, is therefore "something good for man", because with it "man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but also achieves fulfilment as a human being, and, in a certain sense, becomes more human" (No. 9). On the basis of this profound intuition, the Pope offered in his Encyclical some guidelines which are still helpful today. That text was not lacking in prophetic value, and I would like to recommend it to the people of my native land. I am certain that its concrete application will prove very beneficial in Germany's present situation.

And now, as I take leave of my beloved homeland, I entrust the present and future of Bavaria and of Germany to the intercession of all those saints who lived in German territory, faithfully serving Christ and experiencing in their lives the truth expressed in the words which have been like a leitmotif during the various parts of my visit: "Those who believe are never alone". This too was surely the experience of the composer of our Bavarian anthem. In his words, in the words of our anthem, which are also a prayer, I would like to leave behind my own prayer for my homeland: "God be with you, land of the Bavarian people, German soil, my native land! Upon your vast borders may his hand rest in blessing! May he watch over your countryside and cities, and keep for you the colours of his white and blue sky!".

To everyone I offer a hearty "Vergelt's Gott" and "Auf Wiedersehen", if God so wills.

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