



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO POLAND (MAY 31-JUNE 10, 1997)

BEATIFICATION OF
MARIA BERNARDINA JABLONSKA
AND MARIA KARLOWSKA

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Zakopane [Wielka Krokiew]

6 June 1997

1. We meet today in this great liturgical assembly at the foot of the Cross on Mount Giewont, on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I thank Divine Providence for enabling me to celebrate this Solemnity in my homeland, with you - dear Brothers and Sisters - who faithfully preserve in your religious devotion veneration for the mystery of the Heart of Jesus. The Church in Poland made a great contribution to the introduction into the liturgical calendar of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was the expression of a deep desire that the extraordinary fruits produced by this devotion should be multiplied in the life of the faithful throughout the Church. And so it happened. How we should thank God for all the graces which we experience through his Son's Heart! How thankful we are for today's meeting! We have long waited for it. For a long time you had been inviting the Pope, an invitation made on various occasions, especially during your frequent pilgrimages to the Eternal City. You certainly remember how I then used to say that we have to be patient and leave to Divine Providence the visit to Zakopane. During my pilgrimage to Slovakia, at Levoca, I read the placard which you had prepared: "Zakopane is waiting! Zakopane welcomes you!" And today we can say that Zakopane has managed it and I have too. God has so arranged it: Our Lady of Levoca has brought the Pope to Zakopane.

I greet you all, especially the people of Zakopane. I address words of particular greeting to Cardinal Franciszek, Metropolitan of Krakow, to his Auxiliary Bishops, and to the Bishops who have come from neighbouring Dioceses. I greet the clergy, the women Religious, and especially the Albertine Sisters and the Good Shepherd Sisters, for whom this day has a particular significance. I address words of greeting to the Mayor of Zakopane and to the local Authorities of

Podhale. I am grateful for this eloquent homage of Podhale, ever faithful to the Church and the Nation. You can always be counted on! Let us thank God for this day which he has made for us. In a spirit of gratitude I wish, together with you - dear Brothers and Sisters - to meditate upon the great mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is good that we can do this in the course of my pilgrimage occasioned by the Eucharistic Congress in Wrocław . In fact, all devotion to the Heart of Jesus and all its manifestations are profoundly Eucharistic.

2. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). These are the words which we have just heard. With this prophetic quotation Saint John ends his description of Christ's Passion and Death on the Cross. We know from it that on Good Friday, before the Feast of the Passover, the Jews asked Pilate that the legs of those crucified might be broken and their bodies taken away (cf. Jn 19:31). The soldiers did this to the two criminals crucified with Jesus. "But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (Jn 19:33-34). It was the proof of death. The soldiers were able to assure their superior that Jesus of Nazareth had ceased to live. But Saint John the Evangelist sees at this point the need for a special authentication. He writes thus: "He who saw it has borne witness—his witness is true". And at the same time he affirms that in this piercing of Christ's side the Scripture had been fulfilled. For it says: "Not a bone of him shall be broken", and elsewhere: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:35-37).

This Gospel passage is at the foundation of the whole tradition of devotion to the Divine Heart. It developed in a special way from the seventeenth century onwards, in connection with the revelations to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. Our own century testifies to an intense development of devotion to the Heart of Jesus, attested to by the magnificent "Litany of the Sacred Heart" and linked to it "The Act of Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart" with the added "Act of Reparation to the Sacred Heart". All this has profoundly pervaded our Polish piety; it has become part of the life of many of the faithful who feel the need to make reparation to the Heart of Jesus for the sins of humanity and also of individual nations, families and people.

3. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced"- these words guide our gaze towards the Holy Cross, towards the tree of the Cross on which was hung the Saviour of the world. "For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but for us it is the power of God" (cf. 1 Cor 1:18). The people of Podhale understood this well. And as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close and the new one was beginning, your forebears planted a Cross on the top of Giewont. It is there and remains there still. The Cross is a silent but eloquent witness to our time. It can be said that this Jubilee Cross looks in the direction of Zakopane and Krakow, and beyond: in the direction of Warsaw and Danzig. It embraces all our land from the Tatra to the Baltic. Your fathers wanted the Cross of Christ to reign in a special way in this beautiful corner of Poland. And thus it happened. This city of yours extended, one can say, to the feet of the Cross; it lives and develops in its radius. The beautiful little wayside chapels, carefully carved and tended, speak of this fact. This

Christ accompanies you in your daily work as well as on your walks through the mountains. The churches of this city speak of it, both the ancient and monumental ones, which contain the whole mystery of faith and human piety, and also recent ones, built thanks to your generosity.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, do not be ashamed of this Cross. Try every day to accept it and to return Christ's love. Defend the Cross; do not offend God's Name in your hearts, in family or social life. We thank Divine Providence that the crucifix has returned to the schools, public offices and hospitals. May it ever remain there! May it remind us of our Christian dignity and national identity, what we are and where we are going and where our roots are. May it remind us of God's love for humanity, which on the Cross found its deepest expression.

Love is always associated with the heart. The Apostle Paul linked it precisely to that Heart which on Golgotha was pierced by the centurion's lance. In this gesture there was revealed the depth of the love with which the Father has loved the world. He has loved it so intensely "that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). In this pierced Heart that dimension of love which is greater than any created love whatever has found its external expression. In it saving and redemptive love has manifested itself. The Father has given "his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). And therefore Paul writes: "I bend my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph 3:14-15); I bend them to express the gratitude which I feel before the revelation which the Father has made of his love in his Son's redeeming Death. At the same time I bend my knees, so that God "according to the riches of his glory may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph 3:16). The heart is precisely "the inner man". The Heart of God's Son becomes, for the Apostle, the source of strength for all human hearts. All this has been wonderfully rendered in many of the invocations of the Litany of the Sacred Heart.

4. The Heart of Jesus became the source of strength for the two women whom the Church is raising today to the glory of the altars. Thanks to this strength they reached the heights of holiness. Maria Bernardina Jablowska - spiritual daughter of Saint Albert Chmielowski, his helper and the one who continued his work of mercy; living in poverty, she consecrated herself to the service of the poorest of the poor. The Church places this devout Religious before us today as an example. Her motto of life were the words: "To give, eternally to give". With her gaze fixed on Christ she followed him faithfully, imitating his love. She wanted to satisfy her neighbour's every request, to dry every tear, to console at least with a word every suffering soul. She always wanted to be good to everyone, but even better to those most tried by fate. She used to say: "My neighbour's suffering is my suffering". Together with Saint Albert she founded hospices for those who were sick and homeless as a result of war.

This great and heroic love matured in prayer, in the silence of the nearby hermitage of Kalatówki, where she stayed for some time. In life's most difficult moments - in keeping with the suggestions of the one who guided her soul - she entrusted herself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To him she

offered everything she possessed, especially her inner sufferings and physical torments. All for the love of Christ! As Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters Servants of the Poor of the Third Order of Saint Francis - the Albertines - she ceaselessly gave her sisters the example of that love which flows from the union of the human heart with the Sacred Heart of the Saviour. Jesus' Heart was her solace in her service of the most needy.

At the same time, in the territories under Prussian occupation, another woman, Maria Karłowska, worked as a true Samaritan among women suffering great material and moral deprivation. Her holy zeal quickly attracted a group of disciples of Christ, with whom she founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd of Divine Providence. For herself and her Sisters she set the following goal: "We must proclaim the Heart of Jesus, that is, so to live from him, in him and for him, as to become like him and that in our lives he may be more visible than we ourselves". Her devotion to the Saviour's Sacred Heart bore fruit in a great love for people. She felt an insatiable hunger for love. A love of this kind, according to Blessed Maria Karłowska, will never say "enough", will never stop mid-way. Precisely this happened to her, who was as it were transported by the current of love of the Divine Paraclete. Thanks to this love she restored to many souls the light of Christ and helped them to regain their lost dignity.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, both these heroic women Religious, carrying forward their holy works in extremely difficult conditions, showed in all its fullness the dignity of woman and the greatness of her vocation. They showed that "feminine genius" which is revealed in deep sensitivity to human suffering, in tact, openness and readiness to help, and in other qualities proper to the feminine heart. Often this is shown without drawing attention to itself and therefore is sometimes undervalued. How much today's world, our generation, needs this! How badly needed is this feminine sensitivity in the things of God and man, that our families and all of society may be filled with heartfelt warmth, goodwill, peace and joy! How much this "feminine genius" is needed, that today's world may esteem the values of life, responsibility and faithfulness; that it may preserve respect for human dignity! For God, in his eternal plan, has established such a role for women, by creating the human being "man and woman" in his own "image and likeness".

5. In his Letter to the Ephesians Saint Paul makes as it were a personal confession. He writes: "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things" (3:8-9). In this way, through the Heart of Jesus Crucified and Risen, we read God's eternal plan for the salvation of the world. The Divine Heart becomes, in a sense, the centre of this plan, which is mysterious and which gives life. In this Heart the plan is fulfilled. As the Apostle writes: "that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known ... This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him" (Eph 3:10-12).

All is contained here. Christ is the fulfilment of the divine plan of redemptive love. By virtue of this plan man has access to God, not only as a creature to its Creator, but as a son to his father. Christianity therefore means a new creation, a new life - life in Christ through which man can say to God: Abba - my Father, our Father. The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is thus in a sense a magnificent completion of the Eucharist, and the Church, guided by a profound intuition of faith, therefore celebrates this feast of the Divine Heart on the day after the end of the octave of Corpus Christi.

We praise you, Christ our Saviour, who from your Heart on fire with love pour out upon us fountains of grace. We thank you for these graces through which the hosts of the saints and beati have been able to bring to the world the witness of your love. We thank you for the Blessed Sisters - Maria Bernardina and Maria - who found the source of their holiness in your loving Heart.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!